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'Slowest in the world,' says visiting Austrian professor

By Carlos Pablo

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Inquirer is Rotary Club's Newspaper of the Year

By Vick Cuaresma

Friday, June 18, 2004 • 36 pages / vol. 19 / no. 191
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Stop canvassing, Poe ally asks SC

Pimentel cites adjournment of Congress

By Philip C. Tubeza and Cynthia D. Balana

A NOT-SO-PLEASANT distraction breaks the President's concentration during prayers at the start of yesterday's Cabinet meeting in Malacañang

Bishops' litany: We need priests, reforms...

By Josephine Olarong

Politics, big demand for dollars drag peso close to all-time low

Comelec men stage walkout, demand audit

By Marvin P. Marfil

Roseller T. Lim: He stood on Senate floor for 18 hours to stop Marcos but...

By Marvyn Mancao

9/11 commission finds no evidence of al-Qaida links to Saddam

New York Times to Bush: Apologize

WEATHER FORECAST

CIRCLE: Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. The rest of Luzon will be partly cloudy to cloudy with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

Metro Manila	Cloudy with light rain	Cauayan	Cloudy with light rain
Baguio	Partly cloudy	Iloilo	Cloudy with light rain
Tuguegarao	Partly cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with light rain
Laoag	Partly cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with light rain
Puerto Prin.	Cloudy with light rain	Dipolog	Cloudy with light rain
Legaspi	Cloudy with light rain	Zamboanga	Cloudy with light rain
Naga	Cloudy with light rain	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with light rain
Catbalogan	Cloudy with light rain	Davao	Cloudy with light rain

Palace ready to stop FPJ 'proclamation'

By John Lulog Jovellanos and TJ Burgonio

MALACAÑANG is prepared to stop Fernando Poe Jr. in his tracks if he decides to push through with a purported plan to proclaim him the winner of the presidential elections.

"We certainly will, and part of our actions would be to ensure that law and order and the Constitution will be enforced," said deputy presidential spokesperson Ricardo Saludo when he was asked in a briefing yesterday if Malacañang had reached measures to preempt a Poe proclamation.

"If there should happen to be activities and parties that would go against the Constitution then we shall have to apply the full force of the law," Saludo said.

He said that based on the semblance of canvass the Commission on Elections tallied in the senatorial race, President Macapagal-Arroyo beat Poe by over one million votes.

Saludo justified the strong arm tactics the administration would first to the opposition.

"The proposition that we have as (the) (t)he winner, the great majority of the people, want a resolution to the elections. The economy and the country need it so that we can move on and we tackle the problems that have caused problems for the poor and the economy and to focus investments that will create jobs for our people. This is the imperative of the country," he said.

Hypothetical

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunyo was also asked in an interview over government radio—DZRB about Poe's alleged plan to hold a proclamation at Rizal Park if the same time that Congress proclaims Ms Macapagal.

"That a hypothetical at this time. We will deal with that problem at the proper time," Bunyo replied.

But he issued a statement saying that the government "will move quickly to maintain order."

"The authorities are on top of the situation. They are prepared to maintain law and order, to enable democracy to take its course and to protect the people from any attempt at destabilization," Bunyo said.

Saludo brushed at suggestions that Ms Macapagal herself had sanctioned the presidency as a result of undervote.

"I don't think you can call a decision by the Supreme Court in favor of the vice president an undervote. I will have to dispute that. She was elevated to the presidency by an act that is covered by the Constitution," he said.

Gov. Eddie's rally

Police, however, are bracing for more protest actions in the next two weeks, not just by supporters of Poe but of the other presidential candidates.

Thousands of followers of Gov. Eddie Villanueva yesterday kicked off a series of protest actions with a prayer rally at the Comelec headquarters in Pasay City.

"The Filipino people are getting restless," Villanueva told reporters. "With the opening of the ballot boxes, our leaders and the people would be outraged."

Villanueva however said his group only wants five to seven ballot boxes opened, as opposed to other members of the opposition who are pushing for 25 of the boxes to be checked.

Militant groups like the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) and Gabriela, among others, were also planning to hold mass actions between June 17-20 to protest election fraud and violence, according to the National Capital Region Police Office.

From June 21 to 24, party-list groups Bayan Muna, Anakpawis and Kilos ng Bayan will hold rallies in Manila to demand the delisting of the New People's Army from the United States' list of foreign terrorist organizations, among other demands.

Some 50,000 pro-Poe supporters will stage rallies on June 22, 26 and 27 on Roxas boulevard in Malate City to proclaim the actor as the new President. The is expected to be the biggest rally that week.

Other demonstrations are scheduled on June 29-30 and July 1-2, according to the BCDPO.

"We are bracing not just for the proclamation period, but also for the post-proclamation period," said BCDPO chief Director Ricardo de Leon in a phone interview.

He said some of the rallies were "intensified" such a "bigger plot" to derail the proclamation of the next President. "If has something to do with the proclamation," he said, but he declined to name the people behind it. With Alcuin Papa and Maryjean Ybia

Imelda goes to court to stop 'Imelda' docu

FORBES: First Lady Imelda Marcos lashed out yesterday at the maker of an award-winning documentary about her life, saying the film was full of "lies, lies, lies."

Called simply "Imelda," the film won first prize for documentary cinematography at the Sundance Film Festival and has been shown in New York.

It will be shown in Philippine theaters next month, but Marcos is seeking a court injunction to have it stopped.

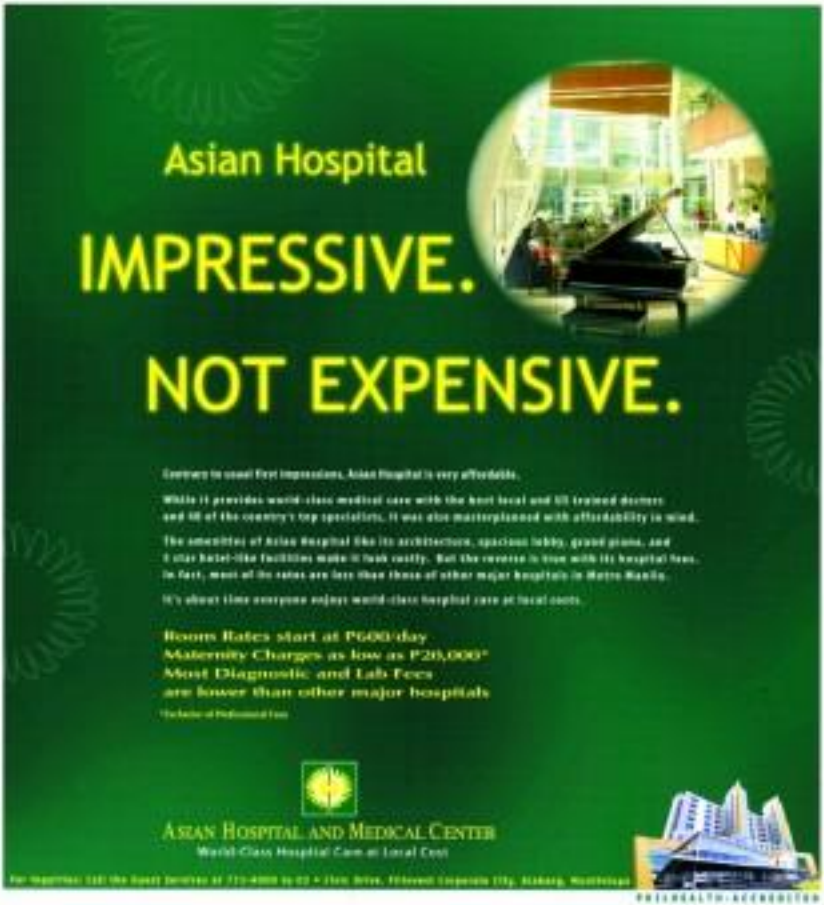
The film, which runs for one hour and 45 minutes, clearly has one to fear Lady and sheds some light on the woman by means of her lavish lifestyle, extensive spending and 3,000 pairs of shoes.

It has been described by the New York Times as "a devastating portrait of how power begets self delusion." Marcos, whose corruption-scarred husband ruled for 21 years before fleeing in exile after a popular revolt, said the film was inaccurate and the filmmaker had secured interviews with her on false pretenses.

"All my lives, even after Ferdinand Marcos died, I have been deeply committed to God, country, the truth and the Filipino people but never got tested by the tests thrown [inside] documentary with real, real, real lies, lies, lies, lies, lies and innuendos," she said.

Marcos accused filmmaker Pamela Elam, a Filipino television worker in Baltimore, of duping her and otherwise "doing what they in television were led to a monster's classic. Elam had been working on it 10 years ago.

"I never heard [a] clear cause and it's been months ago," she said. AFP



Opportunity knocks but once.

JOB Market

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Flight of tax scam suspects feared

By Armand N. Nocum

A KEY witness in the P1.3-billion tax credit scam has raised fears that with the case reopened to move speedily through the courts, principal accused Fourtien Chingkoe, who is abroad, might try to elude justice.

"I think that while the government pressing on immunity, he (Fourtien) may decide to no longer return to the country," said Felix Chingkoe of his estranged brother who is believed to be either in Canada or China.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio has castigated the Sandiganbayan for allowing Fourtien to freely travel in and out of the country in spite of him and his wife Gloria being considered "flight risks."

In a move that was seen as a "major breakthrough" in the six-year-old case, the Office of the Ombudsman agreed to grant immunity to Rita and his wife Benita, provided that they testify against Fourtien, the head of the Chingkoe group of companies.

Felix, co-founder of the business group, and his wife are expected to give documentary and testimonial evidence on the conspiracy allegedly hatched by Fourtien and finance department officials to defraud the government of billions of pesos worth of tax credit certificates (TCCs).

Tax credits are refund payments made by the duties and taxes paid by export enterprises for the imported materials that they use. Instead of a cash refund, the One Stop Shop inter-agency tax credit and duty drawback center (OSS), issues tax credit certificates which the companies would then use to settle their tax obligations.

The scam involved the fraudulent transfer of TCCs to companies, which then used them to file large tax credit claims.

The biggest sources of the fraudulent TCCs were cradle firms, many of which belonged to the Chingkoe group. Felix Chingkoe and his wife are on trial for the alleged irregularities involving P2.5 million TCCs issued for the textile businesses of the Chingkoes.

In the case involving 11 Chingkoe companies, Fourtien Chingkoe was found to have conspired with finance officials to secure TCCs even if they were "not qualified or legally entitled to avail of tax credit."

Graft charges were filed six years ago against Faustino Pelle and Rubita and as well as Antonio P. Beltran, former finance undersecretary and executive director of the OSS; Dilatrix Sochan, former OSS deputy executive director, and several others.

However, last month, the court allowed Chingkoe to take an 11-day trip to Vancouver and then China, where Chingkoe's daughter Christina was once a medical missions.

In granting Chingkoe's motion to travel from May 27 to June 7, the Sandiganbayan's 4th Division said Chingkoe was no longer considered a flight risk because he had always returned to the country in the past.

Pelle said this may longer be the case, however.

"The measures he sees the government is serious (about prosecuting those involved in the tax scam), he will just fly out," he said of Fourtien.

Pelle noted that Faustino's wife Gloria has not returned to the country for more than two years now to face the warrants of arrest for 83 graft cases filed against the couple in the courts.

"She's not coming back," he said of Gloria. He said all three children of Fourtien are abroad. Fourtien owns about five houses in Canada, he said.

Felix earlier said that the reasons why the case against Faustino and his wife had been stalled for years was because "there was a lot of money going around."

Villa-Ignacio said the fact that Fourtien holds Philippine, Canadian, Bosnian and Fijian passports was enough reason to suspect that he may be contemplating to flee from justice.

GMA team also topped local polls — Palace

By Jaime Laking-Jaculbia

As if to rub it in, Malacañang yesterday said the results of the May 10 elections showed the administration dominated not just the presidential and senatorial race but also the elections for local positions from governor to mayor.

The Palace said Mr. Macapagal had garnered "massive support" when his candidates captured majority of the seats in Congress and dominated the power base of provincial and municipal rulers.

It said the administration-led Koalisyon ng Katapatan at Karanasan sa Kaunlaran (Kampi) got 80.4 percent of the seats in Congress, 81 percent of the governors, and 68.3 percent of the mayors in Metro Manila. This is on top of the seven of the 12 new senators.

Malacañang said 82 candidates won 191 of the 212 congressional districts across the country with 91 opponents (two or 42.9 percent belonging to the ruling Lakas-CMD. The rest includes winners from the other 14 parties—Nacionalist People's Coalition which got 38, Liberal Party 29 and Kampi 5. It said the opposition Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino won only 15 congressional seats.

It said were 64 of 79 governors, with 41 elected governors belonging to Lakas, 14 from NPC and nine from LP. The LDP elected only 14 governors, the Palace said.

It said that of the 139 elected mayors, 83 were from the KL. Mr. Macapagal lost miserably in Metro Manila, winning only in one area, San Pedro.

"If it were a sports contest, the results of the last elections from the congressional, senatorial, down to the provincial and municipal levels could be described as a sweep in favor of the administration coalition," said the statement issued by the office of Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye.

It said a political analyst noted that "never since the last Democratic term of President Ferdinand Marcos has a political machinery asserted its dominance with more electoral authority than the administration's PP coalition."

"The last elections are the reincarnation of the party machinery blasting the assumption that elections and popularity based on celebrity fame is enough to ensure victory," the statement said.

Palace eyes new posting for Ebdane

By Christian V. Esguerra

PHILIPPINE National Police chief Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. would have reason to smile even if he is shown the door at the end of the month.

Malacañang is mulling over naming him the next public works and highways secretary or Metro Rail Transit Authority chief, according to two sources in the PNP who were privy to the proposals after made by the administration.

Ebdane is being considered for the plum DPWH post on the basis of his background in civil engineering, one of the sources, a police general, told the INQUIRER in an interview.

If that happens, he will be replacing DPWH Secretary Florante Soriquez, who has been hounded by allegations of corruption.

"Perhaps, the President feels he's fit for the job because of his expertise in engineering and public work," the source said.

Another source, also a PNP general, said Ebdane was likewise being considered for the LRMA job. But he said he did not know Ebdane's qualifications for this particular job.

LRMA Chair Felicito Payumo's six-year term ends on July 1.

Pilot seven class the source said, is that Ebdane would be offered either of the two posts to allocate him when his police career is cut short by July six months before his scheduled mandatory retirement in December when he reaches the age of 56. By July 1, he shall have served two years as PNP chief, a long term by PNP standards.

The move to replace Ebdane, a member of Philippine Military Academy Class '73, is also seen as a way to give other officers who are nearing retirement age a chance to head the police force.

Among the leading candidates to replace Ebdane are Deputy Director General Edgar Aglipay and Director Gil Meh (both members of PMA Class '71 and commander the PNP's No. 2 and 3 officials, respectively.

Gil, who is perceived to be close to President Macapagal-Arroyo, supposedly has a slight edge over Aglipay, who is due to retire in September. Gil won't be retiring until sometime next year.

Another member of Class '73, Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, is said to be out of running.

CONTRACTOR'S LAMENT

AFP procurement a failure

By Alcuin Papa

A DEFENSE contractor yesterday said the military's procurement system was a failure and top military officials were ignoring the problem.

Rochelle Parreño, vice president of Nature Care Industries, said Armed Forces officials should immediately order an investigation of past contracts and prosecute erring officers.

"The law that the procurement of equipment has been transferred to the GSB (Department of Budget and Management) is an admission of failure in the system. Its why not fix the system? Why do they keep ignoring the problems? Why close JAFP (Chief-of-Staff Angelo Reyes) to now the symptoms?" Parreño said.

Nature Care was one of the companies that bid last year for the right to supply the military with 105mm howitzer rounds worth P66 million.

Parreño claimed that her company was arbitrarily disqualified by the AFP's bids and awards committee despite submitting one of the lowest bids and the shortest stock. She added that the bidding rules were applied arbitrarily to favor certain suppliers.

Parreño said she repeatedly wrote to Abaya expressing her alleged irregularities in the bidding but he never replied.

"We are no longer (big) excited to any bidders but disqualified reasons as well and we will do our share in bringing the guilty to justice. Let us stop white-washing the issues," she said.

Amidst the controversy over the allegedly anomalous award of a P456-million contract to supply combat boots to the Philippine Army, Abaya last week disclosed that there was a cartel of companies backed by "friends in the military" which has been cornering military contracts for decades. But he said he was not aware of any anomalies surrounding military contracts in the past.

Abaya said breaking up the cartel was one of the reasons why he agreed to let the GSBM handle the procurement of supplies by the military, but with technical assistance from the AFP.

Following the Oakwood mutiny of 2003, Malacañang ordered that bidding for AFP supplies be handled by the Procurement Service of the budget department (PSGBM). The mutineers-soldiers alleged that key officers attended the bidding system in the AFP's was the bids and awards committees of the PSGBM that awarded the P920-million contract for combat boots to the Filipino firm Filbest despite the company having submitted the highest price bid.

Jaime Cortina Industries, which had submitted the lowest price bid, stirred up the controversy when it filed a complaint against the award, prompting the defense department to order an investigation.

Regarding Nature Care's complaints, the military's public information chief Lt. Col. Daniel Lucero said the AFP has since scrapped the bidding for the 105mm rounds and the funds reallocated to the acquisition of other equipment.

In a statement sent to the Inquirer, Lucero said Nature Care had "failed to comply one of the eligibility requirements as provided for in Executive Order No. 40."

He explained that the nature of the statements that Nature Care had with the AFP for the past three years were not similar to the proposed procurement of the howitzer rounds in the invitation to bid issued by the AFP bids and awards committee.

"In a non-discretionary [unclear] criteria for evaluation, Nature Care was disqualified outright," Lucero said.

Bufano Haza, the lawyer for Nature Care, countered that Lucero did not know the whole story about the bidding.

"We don't know the colonel. We have never met him and he is not privy to the specifics of our complaint. He was only saying what he was told to say," Haza said.

Nature Care's Parreño claimed that based on the terms of the rules, there was no basis to disqualify her company from bidding for the contract.

"This is an example of how the BAC (bidding and awards committee) chooses to interpret the rules to their leisure. There was vagueness in the rules and it was arbitrarily written and interpreted," she said.

On the other hand, Parreño said, they complied with the bidding committee's rules to submit two envelopes, the first containing financial and technical qualifications and the other, eligibility. But when she and another supplier arrived, they were surprised to find that other suppliers had submitted three envelopes instead, she said.

"If they were really qualified to the rules, the other suppliers should have been disqualified. They bend the rules to the advantage of favored suppliers," she said.

Parreño also claimed that another supplier, Rare Sales, had submitted an unsigned document to the BAC, a violation of bidding rules.

Rare Sales' bid was initially considered "failed," Parreño said. But after a 20-minute meeting, the BAC decided that Rare Sales had passed.

Parreño said she and another supplier asked to examine the documents. But the BAC dismissed as late their out of the bidding, she said.

Lucero said previous procurement of ammunition from Nature Care because the subject of a "complex, moral inquiry owing to the numerous complaints from field artillery units."

Nature Care last supplied the AFP with 105mm rounds in February 2000.

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Rescued dolphin dies

DAPECOLARIGA CITY—The Risso's dolphin (Tursiops truncatus) rescued on Tuesday here died yesterday, minutes before she was about to be brought back to sea, Sirey spokesperson Capt. Nancy Pastor said.

The client at exactly 9:30 a.m., Pastor told the Inquirer.

Pastor said fisheries authorities decided to put the dolphin back to sea to allow her a bigger space for recuperation but she expired.

The 8-foot long dolphin was trying to birth at the Model Pier on Tuesday when spotted by Sirey authorities.

They tried to put her back in the deep base for natural water back.

Later, it was found out that the dolphin had three bullet wounds.

Jose Guerrero, parasites officer of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, said they could only do so much because no marine doctor or animal facility was available.

To make the dolphin rest, we therefore moved her near the Pick-ups onboard here.

Guerrero said the animal would be buried after an autopsy. Julie L. Alipala, PIA Mindanao Bureau

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Total, too, increases price of cooking gas

By Abigail L. Ho

THE HIGH international contract prices of cooking gas prompted Total (Philippines) Corp. to hike prices of its liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) by P1.70 per kilogram yesterday.

Starting 12:01 a.m., dealers are now selling TotalGas at P35.70 a kilogram per cylinder, with suggested retail price placed at around P450 per tank.

Earlier, oil refiner Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. and fellow retail product importer Caltex Philippines Inc. raised their LPG prices by the same level.

Leading refiner/importer Unioil had made an announcement of its own adjustments as of press time.

LPG prices have gone up seven times since the start of the year, with the total increase amounting to P8.40 per kilogram.

The latest increase is also the biggest single increase implemented so far by any of the LPG suppliers.

The international contract price for LPG surged to $358 per metric ton (MT) this month, up $50 per MT from $308 per MT the month before.

While the May contract price was lower than that in June, two P1-per-kilogram price increases were effected last month: one in May 15 and another on May 20.

In April, the LPG contract price was pegged at $269 per MT, resulting in two increases that month totaling P1.50 per kilogram.

Apart from the new increase in LPG prices, consumers have had to deal with higher prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene earlier in the month with prices of these products rising by 70 centavos per liter.

Prices of gasoline have so far risen six times this year, while prices of diesel have gone up five times.

These successive hikes in prices of petroleum products led the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board to approve a fare increase of P1.50 for jeepneys and P2 for ordinary buses.

Workshop on 8 Ss to managing stress

A WORKSHOP on how to manage stress will be held today and tomorrow in the Kiss Bus-Gallery in Bel-Air, Makati City.

The Right Size Managing Stress will be conducted by Marivic Ocampo, a pioneer and practitioner of holistic healing, and author of two books, Unitherapy and the Stress Management Manual. She will be assisted by two psychologists and counselors, Cecile Yenko-Lacuesta and Rose Mimi Yenko.

The workshop is a "down-to-earth, down and feel good session that focuses on techniques and tips to handle the stress of daily living. "The workshop helped ease tension. It gave immediate relief," said one participant.

The exercises and skills learned by the participants in the workshop can be applied in their daily life.

Workshop fee is P1,500 and includes a delicious meal.

The Kiss Bus-Gallery is at the ground floor of the LRI Business Plaza, 2218 Florence Garcia (Regency) St., Bel-Air, Makati City.

The workshop is organized by RMP Consultancy and Kiss Bus-Gallery.

The Daily Gospel

Friday, June 18, 2004
Sacred Heart of Jesus

1st Reading:	Exh 34:1-11-16
2nd Reading:	Rom 5:5-11
Gospel:	Lk 15:3-7

Jesus told them this parable, "Who among you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, will not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and seek out the lost one till he finds it? And finding it, will he not joyfully carry it home on his shoulders? Then he will call his friends and neighbors together and say, 'Celebrate with me for I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you, just so, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine upright who do not need to repent."

Commentary:

Given a gentle nature and who had lived a life in harmony and was beginning to get courage to celebrate the things, "Everyone can celebrate today, 'Why?' she said, 'God Himself' and 'What time is it?' It was one of the first hymns I ever had, and the all the best hymns it wasn't introduced to me at all.

The head makes decisions and opportunity, it thinks in numbers and percentages; it would make everything down to a hierarchy sentence like shipboard. In Arnaud Bakon's play, Missing for London, one of the characters, on finding that one of the ten thieves engulfed with disastrous result, remarked, "It was a fair percentage." He displayed in today's gospel passage, had he been working only until he found, would have found 99% quite satisfactory. But he was searching from the heart, which knows nothing about percentages, and he went searching for the one that was lost. That's the reason why he rejoices.

Now do we see the sensible, the unsophisticated, the failures... ? There is the secret way of thinking whether we live out of our heart or out of our head.

Scanned collection by: © Manuel G. Gil 63, Pag. Mabini, Quezon City, UP PO Box 4, Diliman, 1101 Quezon City, Tel. 921-8966, fax 921-7620, e-mail: gil@ateneo.edu, Website: http://www.tabi.ateneo.edu/~gil/. Ateneo de Manila University, Loyola Heights, Quezon City, Philippines

Supreme Court Doctrines

SEVERAL ESTRELLA—Heirs of [illegible] Estrada's attempt to subpoena this Court has been dismissed to secure a decision to transfer to his client's estate does not require any extraordinary diligence. The e-mail... As to Fernandez, is duly bound to uphold the dignity and authority of the court to which he owes fidelity according to the oath he has taken as attorney, and not to pressure clients to the administration of justice. He must always bear in mind that good faith and honorable dealings with judicial officials are primary obligations of an attorney. He must always remember to deal with courts with truthfulness and candor. He with court proceedings. For this, this Honorable should be admonished not to commit similar acts again. P.Gonzales, vice and J. Davide, Cayetano, Panganiban, Laurel, Sandoval-Gutierrez, Corona, Carpio, Carpio-Morales, Callejo, Sr., Azcuna and Tinga, JJ., concur. Puno, Chief Justice, Davide, Jr., Quisumbing and Ynares-Santiago, JJ., on official business. Vitug, J., on leave.

Flores vs. Office of the Ombudsman, G. R. No. 160711, January 13, 2004]

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The WORLD

CECIL LAWSON B. GARCIA

New car bombing in Baghdad kills 35

BAGHDAD—A suicide car bomber killed 35 people at an Iraqi military base in Baghdad on Thursday as guerrillas intensified a bloody campaign to sabotage plans for US-led occupiers to give ways to Iraqi rule on June 30.

The blast outside an army recruiting center on a busy main road also wounded 139 people, a Health Ministry spokesperson said. "The toll is still rising," she added.

Col. Mike Shanney of the 1st Infantry Division said the bomber had driven a white car into the entrance of the base.

One man lay dead in a battered white car after the explosion as Iraqi soldiers, rescuers and locals milled about in confusion. Another decapitated body lay on the road.

It was the latest attack in a lethal drive by guerrillas determined to undermine Iraq's new interim government ahead of the transfer of power from the US-led occupation.

The insurgents, thought to include hardliners loyal to Saddam Hussein, Iraqi nationalists and foreign militants, have targeted Iraq's oil industry, government officials and security forces in the run-up to the handover.

Oil exports, Iraq's economic lifeblood, remained paralyzed on Thursday and engineers said oil wells were being shut down while pipelines blazed up in the south and north were repaired.

On foreign exchange markets, the dollar lost some of its previous day's gains on news of Thursday's blast.

President George W. Bush, whose administration is under fire for its Iraq policies, said on Tuesday the United States was "bringing back a 5,000-year-old institution" in Iraq.

Bush, speaking at an air base in Florida, told US troops they were making an essential sacrifice in Iraq.

The US military said a third soldier had died after a rocket attack on a base south of Baghdad on Wednesday. That brought to 818 the number of American troops killed in action in Iraq since last year's invasion to oust Saddam.

The secretary general of Nato, which is divided over the Iraq war, said the alliance would not "slam the door in the face" of Iraq's new government if it asked for military assistance.

Nato now only provides logistical support for a Polish-led division in south-central Iraq. Nonato and Germany have said they will not send troops to Iraq, and their reluctance to do so otherwise Nato mission has hardened because of the continuing violence and a primary abuse scandal there. Reuters

AN IRAQI Civil Defense Corps officer points his gun as a body is lifted off a pickup truck following an explosion in the center of Baghdad June 17. A car bomb exploded in the grass of a recruitment center for this war-torn Iraqi army in Baghdad, a hospital source said. AFP

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Recent bombings in Iraq

LONDON—Here is a chronology of some of the major bombings in Iraq since the head of the Iraqi governing council was killed in a car bomb attack in May:

May 17—A suicide car bomb in Baghdad kills the head of Iraq's Governing Council Abdul Zahra Othman Mohammed, a Shiite Muslim also known as Izzedine Salim, dealing a major blow to the US coalition.

June 3—A suicide car bomber blows himself up at a US military base near Balji, north of Baghdad, killing at least 13 Iraqis and wounding 20 others and two American soldiers.

June 8—A car bomb explodes in the center of the northern Iraqi town of the mayor's office in Mosul. The US military said at least nine Iraqis were killed and 25 wounded.

June 13—A suicide car bomber kills up to 12 Iraqis, including four policemen, near a US-Iraqi base in Baqubah.

June 14—Five foreign contractors are among 13 people killed in a suicide car bombing in Baghdad. Among the foreigners is Ali Mazah al-Zangeni, chairman of Mazah Corporation, the Abu Dhabi-based company responsible for the bombing.

June 17—A suicide car bomb explodes at the gates to an Iraqi army recruiting base near Baghdad's Mustansiriyah airport, where US troops are based. Iraqi officials say at least 35 are killed and 50 wounded. Reuters

Ex-diplomats: Dump Bush for damaging US prestige

WASHINGTON—Twenty-seven senior US diplomats and military officers on Wednesday strongly condemned President George W. Bush's foreign policy saying the United States has never been so isolated in the world.

The group condemned the "plowing of last year's Iraq war, foreign policy in the Middle East and even the administration policy on HIV.

They said in a statement that the president has failed to meet the "unprecedented challenges" ordinary. It is time for a change."

According to the group, diplomats and Military Commanders for Change, from the start of his presidency "Bush adopted an overbearing approach to America's role in the world, relying upon military might and righteousness, inevitable to the concerns of its closest friends and allies, and the downfall of the United Nations."

Motivated by ideology

"Instead of building upon America's great economic and moral strength to lead other nations in a near-doomed campaign to address the issues of terrorism and it stills its enemies, the administration, motivated more by ideology than by reasoned analysis, ranush out on its own."

They said the Bush administration had manipulated "uncertain evidence" about Iraq's weapons programs to justify an "ill-planned and costly war that which cost is uncertain."

Among the signatories are William Crowe, a retired admiral who was chair of the joint chiefs of staff under president Ronald Reagan; Ronald Neumann, ambassador retired admiral and past director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and several former prominent ambassadors.

Retired general

At a Washington press conference, Merrill McPeak, a retired general and ex head of the air force, strongly condemned the US handling of Iraq.

"Our diplomacy was as clumsy as you can imagine. We have a force headquarters of what is needed to secure the situation," McPeak said Iraq had been a "political disaster."

Chas Freeman, a former deputy defense secretary and ambassador to Saudi Arabia, said the administration had not "available our strategy" and that it would become more difficult after the "hostile to allies" and "indifferent to partners in the region".

Freeman said there had been "horrors" in the United States after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks by al Qaida. Highlighting the destruction of "not an 'error' reactors without charge, he added, "We will, in time, come to be very ashamed of the periodic history."

What have we done?

Bob Oakley, an ambassador to Pakistan, Somalia and Chairs in the 1980s, questioned whether the United States would be able to recover from damage caused to its reputation.

"The US must in to bring about fundamental change, set an example, for the Middle East in terms of human rights, democracy. What have we done? The contrary of what was set out," declared Oakley.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell said the protest was a "political statement" and added "I disagree with the point of view. I don't see that the United States is overstated, as they say."

Powell response

In an interview with Reuters, the Arabic satellite news channel, Powell went on: "What this letter is, is the point of view of 26 individuals, who have made it clear what they wish to see. They wish to see President Bush not re-elected. I do not believe that will be the judgment of the American people."

This is the second group of letter officials to attack the Bush administration's foreign policy during the campaign with a letter to Bush in May calling for dramatic changes in US policy.

Former British diplomats have made a similar protest to Prime Minister Tony Blair.

McPeak said he was a long-standing Republican and former ambassador Bill Harrop and Diplomats and Military Commanders to change had no link to the campaign of John Kerry. Bush's campaign launched in the Blue 2 presidential election.

"Obviously, we think Senator Kerry should be elected but we're not here to speak for him," said Harrop. AFP

Saudi: No deal over hostage

RIYADH—Saudi Arabia will not give in to al-Qaida's demands to free jailed militants to secure the release of an American the group kidnapped last week, Saudi officials said on Wednesday.

Al-Qaida has threatened that unless Saudi authorities free the militants by Friday it will kill the hostage, engineer Paul Marshal Johnson.

"There is no way they are going to agree to their demands," Nawaf Obaid, a senior Saudi security consultant, said.

"There is no way they will release any of those militants who have been key to providing information to disrupt operations of these [militant] recruits."

Saudi government foreign affairs adviser Adel al-Jubeir told CNN that his government was looking into the situation and consulting the United States on what action to take.

"And then we will make decisions on what the next steps are but our history has been one of not negotiating with terrorists," he said.

The threat to kill Johnson, which follows a spate of suicide bombings and shootings in the past six months, named Abdulaziz al-Muqrin as the man to topple the kingdom's pro-US monarchy and drive out Westerners from the world's largest oil exporter.

On a website, al-Qaida showed Johnson, kidnapped in the capital Riyadh on Saturday, blindfolded and sitting in a chair with the silhouette of the orange-uniformed gunman behind him.

An accompanying statement said: "If the tyrants in the Saudi government want to secure the release of the American hostage, they must release our mujahideen held hostage in its jails. They have 72 hours from today. Otherwise I or others will soon follow him."

Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Crown Prince Abdullah showed no sign of compromise, saying the kingdom would strike soon against al-Qaida, led by Saudi-born Osama bin Laden.

"We have forces and until now they have not appeared but you will see them in the coming days," he told Iran on Tuesday.

"We can only be patient for so long and then now or you will see things that will reassure you," he said.

Interior Minister Prince Nayef, in an interview with Paris newspaper Le Figaro, said Saudi Arabia would continue to use force against the militants, but also appealed to other countries, such as the United States, to help with intelligence.

"We don't need help inside Saudi Arabia. But we would like other countries to help us outside the kingdom... we need better exchange with intelligence," he said in the interview. *Reuters*

WORLDBRIEFS

Rumsfeld, Iraq inmate

NEW YORK—US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld ordered a Iraqi man suspected of an Iraqi insurgent center to be kept off the prison books. The New York Times reported on Thursday, effectively making the prisoner a so-called "ghost detainee." Quoting senior Pentagon and intelligence officials, the paper said the prisoner, a suspected Iraqi intelligence officer, was hidden from the Red Cross and other "ghost detainees," largely to prevent the International Committee of the Red Cross from monitoring their treatment and conditions. The Times said Rumsfeld's order last November came at the request of George Tenet, the CIA director who resigned this month. The prisoner, a suspected senior officer of Ansar al-Islam who has not been named, was held at Camp Cropper, on the outskirts of Baghdad International Airport, officials said. *Reuters*

Milosevic rebuffed

THE HAGUE—Warsaw's three judges rejected on Wednesday a motion to drop genocide charges against former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, saying there was enough evidence to pursue them. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia released a ruling obtained earlier by Reuters that said there was a genocide case for Milosevic to answer, dismissing lawyers' arguments that evidence was lacking. Proving genocide is seen as the key test of the tribunal's success and the outcome of the verdict, central to the Hague for the past two years, and with also done more the way the Balkan wars of the 1990s will go down in history. *Reuters*

Russian tycoon's trial

MOSCOW—Russia's richest man, oil tycoon Mikhail Khodorkovsky, went on trial on Wednesday charged with fraud and tax evasion in a case widely seen as initiated by the Kremlin and which has the country's biggest private firm, Khodorkovsky, chairman of oil giant Yukos, considered unofficial and indeed said in the defendants' cage amongst more than seven months in detention. He denied the charges. The trial before three women judges promises to be one of the most important since the 1991 end of Soviet rule. Khodorkovsky is one of the more than a billion-plus about rich. *Reuters*

Thai massage king

BANGKOK—Thailand's massage parlor king Chin Sophonpanich launched his campaign for Bangkok governor on Thursday, vowing to crack down on establishments in the city and push for better fares for those in the sex industry. Chadi, one of at least 10 declared candidates in a contest to succeed Governor Bhichit Rattakul on Aug. 29, said he would run his campaign to legalize prostitution, but wanted to raise awareness of the plight of sex workers. *Reuters*

Top EU job

BRUSSELS—British-appointed Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt's battle for European Commission presidency got off to a shaky start on Thursday as he was criticized by the Spanish and Irish for his own country's poor human rights record. Verhofstadt, 51, is one of a number of candidates vying to succeed Romano Prodi as the next president of the European Commission, the powerful executive arm of the European Union. Verhofstadt's candidacy is opposed by Britain, Germany, Spain and Ireland. Verhofstadt is also criticized by Britain, Germany, Spain and Ireland. Verhofstadt's candidacy is opposed by Britain, Germany, Spain and Ireland. *Reuters*

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

BANCO DE ORO

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Just one more for Viva-FEU

By Mars Anthony Reyes

WARREN Ybañez proved a one-man wrecking crew in the final minute as Viva Mineral Warriors FEU slipped past Welcoat Painters, 66-64, yesterday to move a win away from the PBL 2nd Unity Cup title at the Pasig Sports Center.

Honeycutt, Taulava get heavy fines

By Jaime Hanoera

HEAVY fines and one-game suspensions were slapped on Talk 'N Text import Jerald Honeycutt and Air Enforcer in the aftermath of a free-for-all that erupted in the last 5.9 seconds of their 127-115 victory over the reeling GEVEa Toa collection in the PBA Governors' Cup Commissioner's Cup.

HONEYCUTT

TAULAVA

Honeycutt, Taulava get heavy fines

Wednesday night at the Araneta Coliseum.

Commissioner Noli Eala also suspended indefinitely referee Butch Cardenas, who did nothing to prevent Honeycutt from spoiling the melee that happened in front of him.

Semifinal assessor was released by the league but PBA sources say Honeycutt could fetch a P50,000 penalty and Taulava an estimated P40,000. League rules call for a fine of P10,000 to P50,000 for a flagrant foul even without recalling its injury and P5,000 to P20,000 for disrupting the ball as an opponent.

The 6-foot-8 Honeycutt triggered the incident when he knocked the ball on Michael Gosio's head and wrestled the 5-foot-8 guard to the floor.

All hell broke loose when Taulava got up from the bench, sneaked to the opposite court and attacked Chris Cruz 19 feet opposite Rizalito Jacob.

But TNT wasn't fed the effects of the one-game suspension slapped on the two players since the ban will take effect in a no-hearing march against Red Bull on Saturday.

"Those acts of belligerence were totally unnecessary. Glen's (Cruz) could not have happened had the referees committed Honeycutt in the first place," said Eala.

"If someone showed Caidoren was about a meter away when Honeycutt lunged at Cruz,

WELCOAT'S Singhio drives past Joel Cu of Vex in yesterday's game. The Pilot Masters' top gunner delivered some in the last quarter

CdO Stars seek revenge vs Iloilo Warriors

CAGAYAN DE ORO—The Cagayan de Oro Stars will be out to settle scores with the undefeated Iloilo Warriors when they clash today at the resumption of Southern Division games in the NBC Division of Basketball Conference-1 national championship at the University of San Agustin gym here.

The Stars and the Warriors square off at 3:00 p.m. flowed by former Negros Shaker star Carlos Loyzo Jr., the Pioneers slipped the Stars, 96-94, in overtime in the Asia 4 opener of the tourney sponsored by Panasonic, Spring Cooking Oil, PCSO, Distilleria Limtuaco, Solpicio Lines, Air Philippines, Nestea's Spring Mineral Water, Supercat, Scott and Mallers.

Backed by the Iloilo basketball League led by businessman Robert Ng, the Silver Stars went on to stun the Orange Crew, 92-88, and assume the early southern leadership with two outright wins.

"We are prepared to prove to the Stars that our victory in Cagayan de Oro was no fluke," said coach Boy Cortes. "Silver is now that we'll be playing before our home fans."

The Stars are expected to have a rough time because their team leader, veteran point guard Arthrix Bayle, had already left them to join his wife in London.

Bayle had a solid 23-point, 4-rebound, 3-assist and 3-steal game when the Stars lost to the Warriors.

PBL FINALS
Just one more for Viva-FEU

Shalky, the 5-foot-8 reliever at the point, pulled off two steals in a 10-second span and made three of four free throws to secure the stunning victory that gave the Water Poets a 2-1 lead in the best-of-five championship series.

A victory in tomorrow's Game 4 would give Viva-FEU its first conference title since joining the league last year.

The Water Poets, who won the opener in overtime only to get blown out in Game 2 Wednesday night, 97-79, are enemy no. 1 of Welcoat in the third quarter on a March to Singapore drive.

Known for its patience, Viva-FEU showed back, unleashing a 12-2 salvo in the fourth quarter through frontcat Gamos and Dennis Miranda to get back into the fight.

"That is all about faith in God," said Vex coach Koy Banal. "I realized after Game 2 that Welcoat is indeed a powerhouse team. So we prayed hard for Him to make a way for us."

Holding a slim 64-63 lead and on the offensive, Shalky had a chance to defeat Viva-FEU on the ropes, but Santos wasted high to swat away an Ortigueza layup.

Pardao erred possession and took over from there.

Sealed by Dino Shalkapar as he drove to, Viantes made sure how dooms to give the Water Poets the lead for good, 65-64.

There he broke up Welcoat's next play with a steal of Adriguez with just 20 seconds left.

The Water Poets shot one Clemore Tolentino, who was benched for most of the fourth period. And while Jojo Tanglay came through with a game-high 16 points after making only three in Game 2, the Welcoat forward was held scoreless in the final quarter.

The scores:

VIVA-FEU 66—Gale 0-1, Gamos 9-12, Miranda 6-9, Co 4, Tolentino 0, Rhodes 1, Arroyo 0, Lim 4, Ortigueza 2, Shalky 0

WELCOAT 64—Tanglay 16, Ortigueza 12, Adriguez 11, Salcedo 8, Bautista 6, Cuan 5, Nuno 2, Co 2, Gonzalez 0

Quarters: 16-16, 31-29, 52-53, 66-64

SMB tries to justify firing Long

SAN JUAN DEL Rio may yet escape a fine for deciding to play without an import in the last quarterfinal game in the PBA Governor's Cup Metrobank Center Conference.

The Beermen had shipped home temperamental import Ali Long after only losing 1 kilo and found a replacement was no longer necessary since Diliff's last match against the UB Pro this selection.

The Beermen have seen a letter explaining their side, and a league official said the team could escape the mandatory P100,000 fine if Gov. Miguel Zubiri can come up with a valid reason for sending Long home.

Even if the official could carry here cited a child custody case Long will have to attend to in the US at the end of the season as no official reason for the early departure.

Anticipating a possible outburst from Long, the Beermen decided to send their import home rather than see him in Diliff's final game in the tournament.

Officials seem to dip in Long's performances and the fact that the halftime big import had grazed his teammates over the team's even quarterfinal losses. Francis Ochoa

Lady Stags top Letran, keep semis bid alive

GAME 1 TODAY (Cuneta Gym)
San Sebastian vs. Letran (Women)
8 a.m.—La Salle vs. UST

By Vivia Ebarle

San Sebastian College turned back NCAA archrival Letran, 25-20, 20-25, 25-23, 25-20, yesterday to snap a four-game skid and keep its semifinal berth for a semifinal date in the Shakey's Ulcerque women's volleyball tournament at the Letran gym.

Former national team mainstay Angela Dimakiwat led the Lady Stags' scoring 18 kills and six blocks, while Joan Mendoza contributed 16 spikes before leaving the game with a left shoe sprain in the third set.

But it was volley spiker Lorraine Ladaga, Mendoza's reliever, who set up the win with a kill to enemy court and two service aces, which gave San Sebastian its third win in six games.

Letran, which sank its fifth loss in seven matches, nearly forced a fifth set via a 14-8 run in the ultimate setpoint but San Sebastian's 25-14 lead.

Still, coach Rogelio Gonzales chastised his wards for allowing the Lady Knights to come back.

In the second game, Dindin Santiago sparked La Salle University's collegiate comeback to spoil the Far Eastern University, 22-19, 23-25, 25-15, 25-15, 15-10, and post its fifth season-ending win.

Portugal forges do-or-die tiff with Spain

LISBON—Host Portugal must beat archrivals Spain on Sunday to reach the quarterfinals of Euro 2004 after avoiding elimination with a 2-0 defeat of Russia.

After losing 2-1 to Greece in the opening game, Portugal finally found their form on Wednesday against a soulless Russian side who were reduced to 10 men when goalkeeper Sergey Ovchinnikov was sent off just before half time.

Middlesbrough's Maniche struck first after a smart turn and shot in the seventh minute and Rui Costa wrapped up the victory just before the end in the fruitless of Light.

Spain wanted an opportunity to book their place in the last eight when they let slip a one-goal lead against Greece, who continued their tag as the tournament's surprise package.

The 1-1 scoreline means Spain need just a draw on Sunday against Portugal, while the Portuguese require a repetition of Greece's result against already-ousted Russia.

Euro 2004 rules state that if teams have the same number of points at the end of the group stage, the first factor taken into consideration is the head-to-head results between the teams.

Portuguese captain Luis Figo advised the peasants to watch their backs tomorrow. "It was very important for us because if we didn't win we would have been out of it," he said.

The Spaniards were kicking themselves for failing to take their chances against Greece in Oporto.

Portuguese Maestro opened the scoring with a cool finish in the 20th minute only for Angelos Charisteas to send home an equalizer in the second half.

Meanwhile, Italy have a major blow if their talismanic midfielder Francesco Totti is suspended after being caught on film spitting at a Danish opponent in their goalless draw on Monday. AFP

INSURANCE GOAL: Portugal's Costa (second from left) scores past Russian goalkeeper Vyacheslav Malafeyev (partly hidden).

MYG student-athletes excused from classes

MANILA division of city schools has issued a memorandum to 130 private and public schools excusing their student-athletes representing MYG) dated June 27 to July 8 at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex.

Manila Sports Council chief Ali Atienza said the measure is a sign of the schools' full support to the events.

"We thank the leadership of the division of city schools for their cooperation," he said. The memorandum signed by division superintendent Dr. Ma. Luisa S. Quiñones.

"Through the Games, we hope to fulfill our contribution in the cultivation of sports development agenda while providing our student-athletes a venue that will help mold them as assets of society," said Mayor Lito Atienza.

The city's 397 barangays will be represented, with about 8,000 athletes aged 13 below expected to see action. The MYG will serve as a qualifier for the Philippine delegation to the International Children's Games in Palm Springs, July 29 to August 12.

Tiger Woes

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE CLUBHOUSE talk is not on who's going to win the 100th US Open. The clubhouse talk is centered on Tiger Woods Again.

Woods himself is annoyed by it.

"The problem is, you guys keep asking me about it," he said on the eve of the tournament. "Every tournament I go to you keep asking the same question."

The question, of course, is, will Tiger Woods finally end his losing streak in the majors stretching across years now?

Since winning the 2002 US Open at Bethpage in New York, Woods hasn't won another major. Going into this week's event, it's three October of last year, he hasn't won in seven play. Worse, he's squandered two 36-hole leads the last five months—very uncharacteristic of a guy who has won seven of his first 11 majors since his breakthrough, second-setting win at the 1997 Masters.

The US Open begins today and ends on Sunday (Monday in Manila).

In his practice round a day before the US Open, Woods exhibited the same rusting that has fueled the growing concern about the state of his game: horrendous breaking drives.

That could spell yet another disaster for Woods as the Shinnecock Hills, venue of this year's US Open, is wind-swept, has scant high grass and fairways that bounce the ball like a pinball machine.

Since he left Bush Stadium, his training ground, Woods has had to undergo several revisions of his swing. At one point, he was riled about insinuations he has adopted the swing of Mitch Ohlhaus, his neighbor in Florida and considered by many as his best friend.

The man giving me some tips but that doesn't mean I have accepted his swing," said Woods. "Mitch is a friend and he only has the best intentions for me."

Whatever, Woods has been playing the last several months like he is No. 211 in the world instead of being No. 1. But he really is, according to the Sony World Rankings. The main flaw in his swing is, he keeps hitting the ball sideways off the tee, triggering at times errant drives. If he continues to play that way, he is in danger of not only getting run at Shinnecock Hills but also losing his No. 1 ranking.

No. 2 Ernie Els, for a second that year, is breathing down Woods' neck, ere to mention No. 3 Vijay Singh.

In fact, Woods, who has held the No. 1 position since the 1999 PGA Championship, could lose his spot if Els wins the US Open and Woods finishes worse than 4th.

I remember when Jack Nicklaus, regarded by even his peers as the world's greatest golfer ever, said after Woods walked away with the 1997 US Masters, "I just saw the man who is going to break my record."

As we all know, Nicklaus holds the record for most number of majors won: 18. Many consider him as having really won 20 majors as they consider his two US Amateur titles majors, too.

Woods was 22 years old when he won the 1997 Masters. Seven years later, Woods has eight majors. It could have been more had not the slump started hitting him the last 24 months—all because of what some experts say was his personal to change his swing.

Could that be true? I mean, is Tiger Woods headed for self-destruction because of persistent calls for him to change his swing faster than Jennifer Lopez changes husbands?

But I remember what Tiger Woods' father, the ex-Green Beret who taught Tiger how to play golf, said about his son when Woods started winning the big ones.

"There are only two things that can stop my son now from continuing to stay at the top," said Tiger's father. "First, an accident. And second, marriage."

We can't help it if Tiger Woods suffers an accident that should end his golf career. But because God is good, I think it won't happen.

But marriage ruining his golf game?

That's something debatable.

While it maybe true that his game went on a nosedive ever since Tiger Woods started living with that blonde bombshell Swedish model Elin Nordegren, I would exactly say that then to the mostly domestic existence of Tiger's game.

But then again, who could question the wisdom of Tiger's father, the same man who molded Tiger Woods into golf's ultimate winning machine?

Remember what Earl Woods told Tiger Woods the benefit of the doubt. But, yes, he my patience to hold up, though, he should win the US Open. Or at least finish in the Top 5, if not Top 3.

If not, I might start calling him Tiger Woeful by Monday.

***

POSTSCRIPT: I came a gloat to the winners of the recent Prestige Cup Battle Golf Cup 4pax Sun Link, Wee Geeeanies and Bro Rolando in Class A, and Epi Asuncion, Rowland Ilan Ilarina and Honorio Concepcion in Class B. Sanchez Millionaire, Arcelor Mittal Steel Warriors "Mittal" edged 13-5 in the women's division. BMW's Marian C. Pancho and the winners of the 10 Grand Slams in September will represent the country in the World Match Play on 15-20 in the New Manila Make Golf Club in Sydney, Australia.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
OPINION

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Wolf criers

EDITORIAL

THE OPPOSITION ought to do better than parade before the media, Makapili-style, 10 men who supposedly cheated for the administration in the elections in Cebu, which delivered majority of one million votes for President Macapagal-Arroyo. The men, their faces covered with towels, revived terrible memories of the Japanese Occupation when hooded men pointed out to the Japanese authorities local municipal officials who were supposed to be members of the guerrilla resistance movement. It was a shotgun accusation that left little chance for those implicated to defend themselves, much less to flee. To be sure, the savage tactic of the opposition leaves no such room for the administration—or the nation, for that matter—to defend itself.

Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal was right to express dismay at the opposition's tactic. "If I had something true to say, why would I be afraid to face the people?" reasoned the prelate, who explained that the Cebu Citizens' Involvement in People's Empowerment and Liberation, the archdiocesan group in voters' education and election monitoring, had done its job without having "to hide our faces." He added, "I hope they clarify to me why they (the opposition) did that."

Earlier on, Vidal and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, led by its president, Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla, said that reports from the dioceses all over the Philippines indicated that there had been no widespread fraud and cheating in the May 10 elections as to put their results in doubt. The bishops urged the opposition to substantiate its claims and file suits with the proper authorities in order to lessen national tension.

But alas, all that the opposition has been doing since then is make sweeping generalizations about alleged massive cheating by the administration with nary a proof that can constitute any valid, legal claim that the elections were characterized by fraud and irregularities. It is easy to see that the opposition has nothing in its hands: it has not filed any formal case of election cheating and merely made public accusations that are good for media mileage but hardly good for the health of our democracy or the cause of the truth.

There are now indications that the opposition tactic is backfiring. One of the men presented by the opposition told the National Bureau of Investigation that he had been paid to make the claim of fraud during the Cebu press conference. Was he an administration stooge? We wouldn't know because the opposition had presented masked men and the public is not in any position to make a case-to-case correspondence between those who appeared in the Cebu meeting and the one-for-NBI presentation in Manila.

In the meantime, the opposition has not moved even by an inch its cause to convince the people that the elections were characterized by massive fraud engineered by the administration. It has again botched its case. Its presentation of hooded men to the public appears like a travesty of justice that the truth is supposed to uphold. By its blind insistence that the administration had committed fraud, the opposition is destroying our democracy.

The opposition has all along shown the worrisome behavior of discrediting the elections. When it declared Senator Nene Pue Jr. as standard-bearer, it boasted that his candidacy would be like a tsunami that would overwhelm and level that of Ms Macapagal. It repeated the boast when survey after survey of the Social Weather Stations and Pulse Asia showed Pue leading the tsunamilent by a commanding margin.

When the surveys of the same pollsters later showed the incumbent catching up with Pue, the opposition dismissed the results and started raising the alarm that the administration would cheat in the elections. It claimed that the incumbent would unleash a tsunami of cheating. Like the boy in Aesop's fable, they started crying wolf.

The wolf-crying continues up to now as Congress canvasses the votes, a process that has been characterized by opposition stonewalling, heckling, rabble-rousing, dilatory tactics and filibustering. What we are seeing is beginning to look like an opposition tsunami against Philippine democracy itself.

And so amid the opposition's noisy cry of cheating and fraud, are the people anywhere near to catching sight of even the tail of the wolf? As far as we can see, no. But there's another wolf in our midst. It's the wolf tearing apart our democracy.

Tyranny of the majority

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

MIND is clear why the congressional canvassing of votes is very slow: members of the majority in the joint committee doing the canvassing do not want to open the shortest return to determine the authenticity of the statistical entries in the provincial certificates of canvass (CoCs). The CoCs are the result of the votes cast collected in the election returns. The opposition claims the numbers in some CoCs do not tally with the totals of the election returns. Those for President Macapagal-Arroyo were inflated while those for Fernando Poe Jr. were deflated—a classic case of digging holes.

How do you determine the accuracy and authenticity of the CoCs other than by checking their source, the election returns? Of course, the majority essentially refuses to open the election returns. It is like the second-stringer that the pro-Erap senators refused to open during his impeachment trial for fear that it contained the smoking gun that would doom the president. They justified the anti-Erap forces to walk out of Congress and into the Edsa Shrine. What followed was Edsa II, which toppled Erap.

The irony was that the second envelope did not contain the smoking gun. It contained the finally-opened after Erap ceased to be president. It was the four other supporters in the senate that did have it, the second envelope.

Is history repeating itself? GMA supporters in Congress are afraid to open the election returns. Why? Is there a smoking gun there? Will there be proof of cheating by fraud there?

If there was no cheating and GMA really won, the election returns will show that. There will be no doubt as to her legitimacy. The people will assume her as their President. Charges of fraud by the opposition will no longer be believed.

But hide these election returns and people will believe that GMA did steal the presidency from FPJ as she did earlier from Erap (Jose Ejercito Estrada). I will then insist on the creation of a World Records as having stolen the most, twice: not only once but twice. He may have been proclaimed as President by Congress, but would the lie able to rule peacefully? She would have six years of destabilization. Adventurers would have a ready excuse to topple her: because she is a "bogus President."

Her supporters in Congress think they are being loyal to her but they don't realize that they are actually doing her a disservice—if the fraud really were without cheating.

By blocking every opposition move to make the canvassing more credible, they throw how much they fear the election returns. You first doubt only if they will show proof of cheating. But if there was no cheating in the first place, what is there to be afraid of?

The answer is that can only be that they're afraid to open the election returns because they would show clear proof of cheating. And that is what will stick in the minds of the people if they continue to make them secret.

The excuse of those in the majority is that opening them would delay the canvassing and the proclamation of the new president, adding a threat of a power vacuum and chaos if no president is proclaimed by June 30. This is not true, and they know it. As has been repeatedly noted before, the former president will win merely by one vote if he receives 1 vote more than half of the votes cast—because the votes of the canvassing become equal to the election returns and no delay is.

But a delayed proclamation is better than proclaiming a bogus president. Proclaiming a president whose mandate is under a cloud of doubt would be much worse than delaying it a little until the true winner is determined with no cloud of doubt. Better late than wrong.

Philippine democracy: Bushed but not gored

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

LAST week, the Supreme Court unanimously threw out the petition of an opposition congressman to stop the canvassing of votes cast for president and vice president, and allowed the power of Congress to create a joint canvassing committee. Significantly, however, four justices urged our lawmakers not to take the enrollments of canvass on their face but, when conducting the canvass, ... The search for the truth about the true will of the electorate should not be confined to the four corners of the certificate of canvass. The truth, if hushed by the opaque face of the certificate of canvass, must be removed from the election returns and statements of votes."

The words of our Supreme Court justices should guide our lawmakers in making an earnest effort to give meaning to the Constitution's promise that "sovereignty resides in the people and all power emanates from them."

Some CoCs have been identified as "fatal items of fraud," showing statistical and mathematical impossibilities, and outright tampering. The administration members of the joint canvassing committee, by the strength of their numbers, have parried every opposition attempt to open the electoral vaults. Opposition Rep. Rodolfo Plaza from Agusan del Sur lamented: "Sinara na nila. Ayaw (they've closed it off. They refuse) to open." All appeals to reason have been apparently thwarted by the legal view that the joint committee must limit itself to the CoCs.

It is useful elsewhere to review already the grounds for the Pure opinion. The Constitution provides that the Congress must look at the "authenticity and due execution [of the certificate of canvass] and the election returns or other papers transmitted to it by the boards of canvassers." Section 20 of the Omnibus Election Code (Batas Pambansa Blg. 881) provides that the certificate of canvass "shall be the basis for the proclamation, but the board or any member thereof may file a petition in quo warranto with the Supreme Court questioning the ineligibility of any person proclaimed as elected or the validity of his proclamation."

Justice Reynato Puno, joined by Justices Antonio Eduardo Nachura, Romeo J. Callejo Sr. and Adolfo S. Azcuna, said the canvass "cannot be done in a ministerial manner [as if one had only to] tally the opaque face of the certificate of canvass, must be removed from the election returns and statements of votes."

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Justice Puno, however, notes the words "in the manner provided by law," and invited Congress that we provided in Republic Act No. 7166. Under that law, authenticating includes the task of verifying that "there exists on its cropsheet or other authentic copy of the certificate of canvass or discrepancies in the votes of such candidate in words and figures in the certificate." The law further states that when there are "irregular or alterations which may cast doubt" on the integrity of the CoC, Congress must have recourse to the election returns submitted to it. That is the law Congress itself has passed, and thus the joint committee canvassers has no power to repeal.

The Supreme Court decision does not guarantee a sober, well-behaved Congress. It hopes merely to ensure that lawmakers are accountable, no longer by empty pronouncements over-worked, but still well-founded, proper purposes to ensure that the CoCs are not distorted and manufactured, and only reflect the people's will. The Puno opinion should dispose of the highly legalistic arguments that the canvassing committee must limit itself to the election returns and keep the voice of reason present.

Should the Court shirk its duty of the letter of the will contrary, whether the whole Congress

Raul C. Pangalangan is professor of law at the University of the Philippines College of Law.

or just a joint committee. After all, why should it matter if a COC is challenged by 20 Ombudsmen in January's election, or by one Pentecho before the grand assembly of the Supreme Court? Is it the size of the committee members all vote along party lines? Is it therefore not a question of how many objects, but how well.

The Supreme Court has refused to stop the canvassing in Congress and has deferred to the power of Congress, a co-equal branch of government, to interpret its constitutional duty to canvass the presidential votes. It has shown that, in the electoral process, the rule of course is that the majority-counting machine process is respected.

On the other hand, when the four justices will Congress that it must check the CoCs against the election returns on which they are based, they justified their decision "mainly to interpret what the Constitution means when it says that CoCs can be challenged only for their "authenticity and due execution."

The Supreme Court has done what it could to support the democratic process. The 10 Supreme Court justices have voted for 10 Bush vs. Gore decisions! Mentioned in a previous piece in this space) because it stopped a manual recount that aimed to confirm the will of the voters, since then lobbied "a vote whatever may." The Philippine Supreme Court has done no such thing. It has allowed the count to proceed and four of its members have shown Congress the legal path to it sooner than the canvassing, though it has made everyone tradeoff and reassured, will not give Philippine democracy.

Justice Puno continued, "The nation can endure a slow but trustworthy tally. It may not survive an indefensible result, however speedy it may be." In conclusion: "By unreasonably or unreasonably judgment by Congress may deprive of rejection of the parliament of the citizen of the people. And the danger is that we may not just face a more moderate."

Close to breaking point

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

THE MOST two words could break the back of Philippine democracy are martial law.

The long years in Congress of the combination of camera of votes for president and vice president is testing the limits of that system. The elasticity of that system, now being abused by systematic obstruction of the proclamation of winners by Juan Ponce Enrile, may soon be tested to the breaking point.

Where will stop, we don't know. Are high tension incidents in the course of the already celebrated session of the National Board of Canvassers can spark chkoopy. It could be ignited by a number of factors. Another suit in the Supreme Court questioning the question of whether the adjournment of Congress nullifies it from continuing the canvass could be one. A walkout, an opinion being rendered by the opposition in the form of a separate opinion, or by the majority in the form of a separate opinion, or by the majority in the form of a separate opinion, or by the majority

Wanted: statesmen

LETTERS

AFTER READING the INQUIRER May 31 editorial "Behind the delay," I feel the entire show was embarking in it that was unique. And the days I shed no figure's one. I am not usually given to writing letters to the editor, but in this one, I feel I have to make one exception that puts the biggest issue, since quote: "In other words, the majority has a relative in a joint session of Congress or merely in a joint committee. If the opposition proposal that both houses conduct the canvass had been carried, the same principle would have applied. But now that the new convening rules have been approved, Senators come around and question the principle of majority rule itself."

I have an quarrel with that logic if the issue being tossed on persons or policy decisions discussed by the members of government represented by a party like Lakas-CMD, or the Liberal Party or the Pwersa ng Masang Pilipino. But the canvassing of the COCs is not—and should not be much less—a partisan exercise. Needless to say, Congress, as the National Board of Canvassers, should not behave like a body of several political parties each pushing its own partisan agenda. When voting on questions pertaining to the canvass, Congress should not be guided by partisan interests or bias but by the paramount interests of the nation and by the truth, to paraphrase should be first up, if they must be, not by partisan loyalties, but by love of country.

Sadly our Congress has reduced every thing true fair relative to jurisdiction into a partisan issue or caucus, including the election of its presiding officer and vice presidential votes.

Sadly we cannot find a statesman nor unity in the opposition camp for rise to the occasion.

—HECTOR BOBOL
hqb@eyahoo.com

A reminder for our political leaders

TIME is a reminder for former President Fidel V. Ramos, Speaker Jose de Venecia, Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. and all other political leaders.

Congress has a bigger responsibility than just canvassing the votes cast for the presidential and vice presidential candidates. Congress has the paramount duty to ensure that the results of the canvass will be credible and will not undermine the integrity of the electoral process, our most basic democratic institution.

Members of Congress, whether of the administration or opposition—should not act as if they're engaged in a court tactic, fighting to gain advantage for their clients through technicalities.

Our country has reached a point where it can now be likened to a mountain slope where snow is harshly accumulating. A strong move by Congress could trigger an avalanche. Please think about it.

—FRANK WINCKLER
philnews2@yahoo.com

Lawless highway

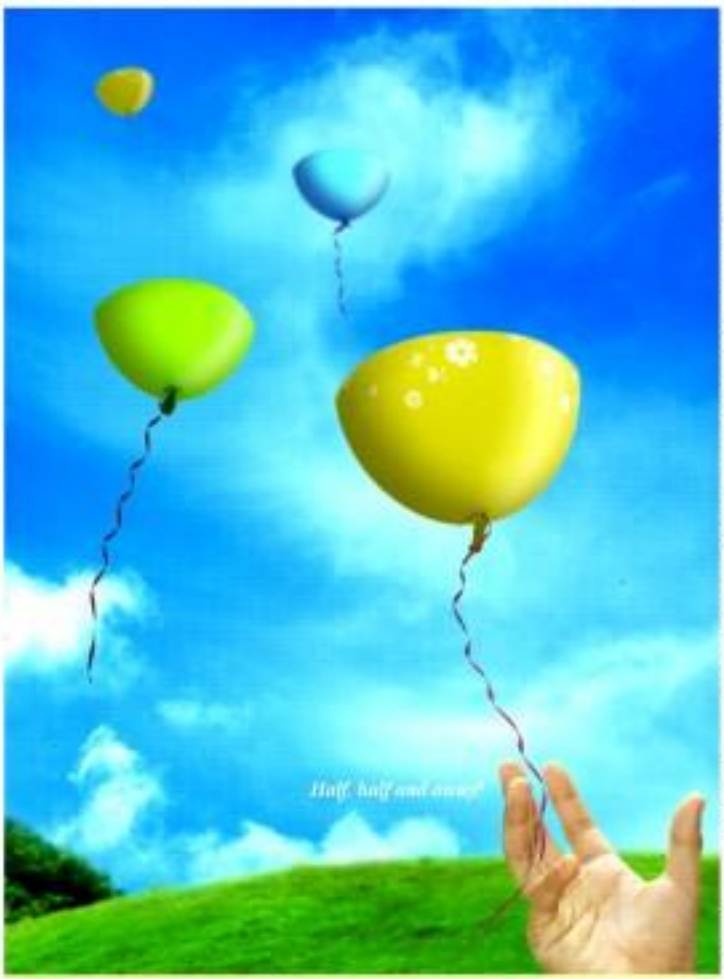
ONE only needs to travel to Laguna to feel the wounds of abusing the national highway with those three-wheeled monstrosities called tricycles. Although thought (or at least we like to believe) that tricycles are limited to national roads except in certain cases, such as when a national highway connects the center of a town, I need no reddi the act of driving along the Laguna highway from Los Baños to Pangil. A few years ago, the trip took less than 45 minutes to negotiate the 64 km distance.

Today, the same trip takes at least one hour and 15 minutes and as long as two hours because the highway is now dominated by tricycles. Before, they were not allowed to ply the busy roads; drivers must, now, they literally had it over that 19-km stretch. The big, Clsa diversion road cuts through the outer edge of the capital town of Sta. Cruz from the Magdalena-Junction in the Magdalena-Junction. A few years back, tricycles were not allowed on this road. Now, that stretch is crawling with tricycles. Even the Nia diversion, a short stretch that skirts the narrow streets of Pila-cruz, is now literally used by tricycles. This goes all the way to Pagsanjan, Kalayaan, Lumban, Pila, Pakil, Pangil, Siniloan and on to Siniloan. Tricycles have literally invaded our (Laguna) highway. The pure of 4-wheeled traffic grinds to a crawl whenever tricycles hog the lanes. Our highways are not designed to accommodate both 4-wheeled vehicles and tricycles. It's like an inherently slow.

And tricycle drivers are generally undisciplined (understandably so). They'll slow traffic (slow left and right. They don't seem to care about the delay they are causing to the motorist (longer they are having to wait) and the frustration it has caused. Drivers of fancy vehicles are bound to lose their composure when following tricycles. When they see their chance, they make impatient and unsafe maneuvers that could lead to fatal accidents. Most relatable accidents on this highway involve tricycles. They are dreadly too many privately and the deadliest of all is the tricycle.

How come the dominion of our highways by tricycles is so complete and unopposed? Can't the authorities do something about this lawless menace? Please do.

—MR. JERRY CANTALEJO
Main Avenue, Marymount Village,
Los Baños, Laguna



Pesos Fly Redemption Chart

Route (for travel to destination shown)	Round Trip Economy Class Travel	Round Trip Unrestricted Economy Class Travel	One Way Economy Class Travel	Unrestricted Round Trip Economy Class Travel
Manila - Davao	4,999	12,999	3,199	9,999
Manila - Cagayan de Oro	4,999	12,999	3,199	9,999
Manila - Zamboanga	4,999	12,999	3,199	9,999
Manila - Iloilo	4,999	12,999	3,199	9,999
Manila - Bacolod	4,999	12,999	3,199	9,999
Manila - Tagbilaran	4,999	12,999	3,199	9,999
Manila - Cebu	4,999	12,999	3,199	9,999
Manila - Puerto Princesa	4,999	12,999	3,199	9,999
Cebu - Zamboanga	3,999	10,999	2,799	7,999
Cebu - Davao	3,999	10,999	2,799	7,999
Cebu - Cagayan de Oro	3,999	10,999	2,799	7,999
Manila - Naga	3,999	10,999	2,799	7,999
Manila - Legaspi	3,999	10,999	2,799	7,999
Manila - Kalibo	3,999	10,999	2,799	7,999
Manila - Tacloban	3,999	10,999	2,799	7,999
Manila - Laoag	3,999	10,999	2,799	7,999

Summer Club 4th Anniversary: FLY FOR HALF THE RATES

Summer Club members can now fly with just half the regular Pesos Fly fare from June 10 to August 15, 2004. Call the Summer Club hotline now at 1-800-1888-2882 for details.

Many Happy Returns

CEBU PACIFIC

95

On the DepEd bridge program

THE BRIDGE program of the Department of Education is an extension of the DepEd's capability to provide quality elementary education.—Eddie Tolentino III, 7-F Sevilla ng Pasig Bldg., St. Annemarie Executive Drive, sta e-mail

* * *

Does the DepEd have any statistics showing how many of those elementary students come from public schools and private schools? Every year, private schools increase their tuition by at least 10 percent. It is a harsh increase, but no parents never complain, hoping that he is entrenched will give our children the best. Now is the best time to carefully review whether the tuition fees we pay are commensurate to the education that our children are getting.—Rosemarie Gamboa Encarnacion, 2213 Arbolado Court, South San Francisco, CA USA.

* * *

If you really want to have a bowl, inquire nowhere to take the same high school level test.—Mike Jacob, 22 Reino St., Mega Heights, Cavas, Cagayan de Oro 9000, sta e-mail

* * *

It is upsetting to know that the DepEd has finally come to grips with the low quality of instruction in the public educational system and has taken a bold step to remedy it.

But I wonder whether a thorough study regarding the proposal was ever conducted. The decision to implement the bridge program seems to have been a shock to many. It seems that the whole thing was rushed. I have the following questions: (1) Are there enough classrooms to accommodate? (2) Is there a proper program—with clearly defined objectives, instructions, guidelines and counselors? (3) Are there enough resources and materials for students to help them acquire the skills? (4) Can't the same effect be obtained if the teachers were the ones given proper professional development training? (5) With the declining education budget, increasing number of schools-children and decreasing number of teachers, is the additional cost really the most feasible solution?

The problem in Philippine education is a vicious cycle. I hope this be to the program will break, not enlarge, it.—Cesar Reyes Jr., Singapore, via e-mail

* * *

Adding a year will not result in any substantial gain if the method of teaching, the review/ readiness to teachers, and the proficiency of teachers remain as they are. How cannot squeeze milk out of the dried udders of a cow, no matter how much time he or she spends on it. Students are failing in high and honor in cream of the lack of teachers who are qualified to teach those subjects. What difference will it make if the eighth-day beat or five years studying under a bad teacher? It will just be a waste of time. The proponents of this program should try teaching a subject in a class of 60+ grade school pupils in one if existing unaircon-ditioned or rear in a class with persons heat-resolute.—Emilio Bitanicon, #6-20B Silicon Drive, Silangang Mansinika, sta e-mail

* * *

I don't think the DepEd can claim it is doing its job by putting up the bridge programs. In the first place, if it is indeed doing its job, I don't see a reason why this bridge program should be enforced. If it is doing its job, students are not to be retained in 4 and 5 years only for purpose of English and Math. I guess DepEd officials should do favors or stop filling their pockets with money, and instead start filling the heads of students with knowledge. Only then can they say that they're doing their job.—Mohammad Jamsuyan, Dagupan Street, Tondo, Manila, via e-mail

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

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Across the NATION
Asssistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Radio commentator shot dead in GenSan

By Aquilino Z. Zonio
PDI Mindanao Bureau

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—Two unidentified men riding on a motorcycle gunned down a radio commentator here at around 7:15 p.m. yesterday.

Supt. Willie Dungcas, city police chief, said Fly Boruyca of Barangay Bula, was also riding on a motorcycle on his way home in Mabuhay, Banga International when he was shot with a .45 cal. pistol upon reaching Crossing Upper Labay, 8 kilometers from the city proper.

Boruyca died on the spot while the suspects fled.

Dungcas said the assailants had tailed Boruyca since he left the city.

He said investigators were still being conducted to determine the identities of the killers and their motives.

Boruyca was known for his stinging commentaries against several politicians.

He became the latest addition to the growing number of journalists murdered in the country.

Loggers in Bulacan, Ecija get ultimatum

By Jaime Laude
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CABANATUAN CITY—Environment and local government officials escorted illegal loggers in the watershed area in the Nueva Ecija-Bulacan boundary to stop their activities until June 20 or face prosecution.

Environment Secretary Elisea Gozun led a dialogue in General Tinio Sunday to stop the denudation of the watershed, and government personnel, aided by the military and the police, would hunt and prosecute those who illegally cut down trees in Doña Remedios Trinidad town in Bulacan and in General Tinio.

Gov. Thomas Joson III, who attended the dialogue, said illegal logging has continued in the General Tinio and Doña Remedios Trinidad area, which comprise the 21,000-hectare watershed for Angat Dam. The dam supplies the water needs of Metro Manila.

Reports from the office of Josefito Blanco, community environment and natural resources officer for south Nueva Ecija, showed that illegal loggers are now concentrating on Doña Remedios Trinidad after operating in the now deforested General Tinio.

Reports indicated that a big number of men in Sumacab Cooperation, Rio Chico and Pias in General Tinio are always in the mountains for their illegal logging activities.

They will stay for two or three months sawing down trees and using chain saws to cut them into crude lumber.

They then hand these pieces of lumber through draw (made) power and store them in their respective hideouts in Bonabon Barrio near the Sumacab River.

The crude lumber, the reports added, are then hauled off by their financiers. The financiers support the loggers' families while they are away the weeks.

Members of the DENR and military commandos team who acted on the plan to confiscate the crude lumber were always repulsed by "mob power" by hundreds of residents, including women and children, of the three barangays.

Several persons charged with illegal activities remained scot-free for what seemed to be an imperfect or weak system for their prosecution.

"I feel ashamed before the other governors, particularly the governor of Bulacan, because of the continued activities being done by our provinces mates," Joson said.

He called on the housewives present during the dialogue to ask their husbands to go down from the mountains and engage in other activities for their livelihood.

"We will not allow illegal logging to continue. We will now run after them and charge them in court," Joson said as the second dawn a request of some residents to cut the old mahogany in December this year.

ROUNDUP

Gunmen attack village

ZAMBOANGA CITY—At least 15 armed men attacked a village on Pandatan Island off Lantawan, Basilan, late Monday night and burned at least four houses, sending residents into panic, Col. Raymundo Ferrer, commander of the 44-day's 103th Infantry Division based in the province, said yesterday. Ferrer said the attackers, who fled after the incident, had no casualties. He said a policeman was also wounded. He said Commander Wahab Nasdol, who heads a notorious bandit group known as Nasdol, and Bal Jalbuk, another group reportedly had participated in the attack that burned down 15 houses in Barangay Alang-alang on Tuesday night. The armed men had gone into Wahab Bay at 9 p.m., burned down the houses at 10 p.m. and shot the victims, he said. **John Aliguia, PDI Mindanao Bureau**

Wild boar endangered

KIDAPAWAN CITY—Farmers around Mount Apo agree that the wild boar, locally known as baboy ramo, have become an endangered species in the Lanao provinces. The animal, which is a protected species under the Wildlife Act, has become the pet of farmers because it destroys their crops. Community servant assistant Nelia Sumagaysay, officer Rebecca Rosario said they have been trying to implement measures to protect the wild boar. Rebel conspiracies the problem is that wild boar meat is also very popular among locals, she said. Amores said the city's supply of wild boar meat came from Lanao del Sur, where most residents do not eat pork. It makes said her office had already identified at least two enclosed wild boars here, but could not say either them because they had been issued business permits.

Richard Amores, PDI Mindanao Bureau

2 hurt in firecracker blast

BIÑAN, Laguna—Two workers sold a firecracker factory in Barangay Canlubang Biñan were hurt when their shanty exploded yesterday. Police identified the victims as Joseph Geronimo, 28, and Rodrigo Prado, 22, who both suffered burns on the body. Reports said the explosion was caused by faulty electrical wiring inside the factory. Police said one of the victims, he said on a TV set but its detection cord produced sparks and triggered an explosion. The victims, according to police, were mixing chemicals for firecracker ingredients.

Clarissa Reyes, PDI Central Luzon Desk

Retired teacher found dead

BACOLOD CITY—A retired teacher was found dead in Barangay Pahanocoy here on June 4. Police said the body of Lydia de Lara, 60, of Barangay Tangub, Bacolod City, was discovered near his shanty in the area with a bullet wound in the left portion. Jose Lowelyn, 35, an engineer of the Bacolod municipal government, said his mother's P10,000 cash and automated teller machine (ATM) card were missing. He said his children had no business enemies although sometimes they quarrel with the family handyman. Rosario was a chemistry instructor at the Don Carlos Ilustre Memorial State College in Barlaan City in Negros Occidental. She retired in 1987.

Carlo Roque, PDI Visayas Bureau

Bank officials say they were victims of scam

By Anselmo Roque
PDI Central Luzon Desk

CABANATUAN CITY—Officials of a rural bank in Nueva Ecija who were charged with estafa and falsification of public documents for the alleged irregularity in the use of Bureau of Internal Revenue forms in real property transactions said they were the victims in the case.

"We were surprised (about the charges). There was a grievous error in filing the cases against us considering that we are supposed to be victims of an alleged fraud," Precival Peralta, president of the Mendoza Rural Bank Inc. (MRBI), told the inquirer.

He said the operations of their bank is above board and the records of their transactions are "definitely in order."

Peralta said the investigators "did not go deeper" and failed to consider other angles to determine what really happened and who were the people involved.

Syndicate

Peralta, also president of the Federation of Rural Banks of Nueva Ecija, hinted that they could have been victims of a syndicate who made big money using fake BIR forms.

Jose Paulino, chief of the BIR revenue district office here, said the irregularity involving the use of fake BIR certificate authorizing registration (CAR) forms has deprived the government of revenues.

The CAR, Paulino said, is a certificate of payment and authority to transfer real property from one person to another. The form bears payment of capital gains tax and documentary stamps and is necessary before the registration of the property.

Peralta said the other MRBI officials charged in the case are "honorable men who would not commit any dishonest act."

Suit

A police team investigating the alleged irregularity used Peralta and MRBI directors Dionesio Viloria, Rogelio Manansang and Virgilio Manalang for two counts of estafa and falsification of public documents before the provincial prosecutor's office on June 4.

The charges stemmed from the bank's alleged evasion of payment of P429,033.90 worth of capital gains and documentary stamps by using spurious certificates in two transactions in November last year.

One of the involved certificates was for a real estate property where the bank was the vendee. In the other CAR, the bank was the vendee.

The complaint said the two CARs were found to have been properly issued to two other persons.

Paulino said the report that although the form was authentic, the original entries were erased and replaced. The signatures of BIR officials involved in the transaction were forged, he added.

METRO
Editor Abelardo S. Manalay

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SUPERLOTTO 6/49 3 13 26 28 39 45

Malabon City employees cry for help over standoff

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THEIR salaries still not released, their officials confined, Malabon City government employees are now seeking help from the national government to resolve the standoff that has caught the city in a week-long.

Yesterday, returning Mayor Jaime Veron to and acting Vice Mayor Alfred "Jayjay" Vergara-both reported for work and stayed in their respective offices: Veron—on the third floor, Vergara—on the ground floor.

And the employees are caught in between.

The 1,500 regular and casual employees, which should have received their salaries on Tuesday, still were home empty-handed yesterday.

City treasurer Eusebio Pelayo, who also failed to talk to Manila Electric Company officials after they received a notice of disconnection for unpaid power bills.

They could just pay Meralco. But they feel that if the employees' salaries, budget officials don't know whose signatures they should get for the vouchers—Veron's or Vergara's?

The release of funds for other government services—like payment of allowances for government workers—is also stalled.

Confused, Pelayoano will be writing the interior department to ask for advice.

City legal officer Danilo Lim, who earlier released a legal opinion stating Pleroma was the lawful mayor, told the Inquirer the current was to end the standoff was for the Office of the President to step into the issue and reconstitute a committee.

TEXT SECURITY Two members of a combined police and military unit formed out soon to watch over the Edsa Shrine for any destabilization attempt take time out on Thursday to send text messages to their friends. JOEY ARGUELLES

Manila Water rates to go down in July

Cutback due to FCDA adjustment

By Tina Santos

THANKS to small blessings.

Already burdened by increased transport fare and with the prospect of higher electric rates ahead, consumers noticed by the Manila Water Company have something to look forward to next month.

Beginning July 1, water rates in the east zone of Metro Manila will be down from P8.59 per cubic meter to P8.17 of the basic charge. The decrease has been attributed to the peso's slight appreciation against the dollar during the second quarter, and the operating efficiencies achieved by the water utility.

The Manila Water east zone covers San Andres and Sta. Ana in Manila, most parts of Quezon City, Makati City, Mandaluyong, San Juan, Rizal City, Pasay City, Pateros, Taguig and Pasig province.

"The exchange rate of peso to a dollar averaged higher at P56.84 in May compared to the February average of P56.87," said Manila Water president Antonio Aquino, citing restrictions passed by the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System and its Regulatory Office.

He added that the operating efficiencies of Manila Water, including higher volumes of water delivered to customers, lower system losses and higher collection levels prompted them to lower the water rate cutback.

The FCDA is a rate adjustment mechanism used by utility companies adjusted upward to recover losses if the peso depreciates, and downward if the peso appreciates against the other currencies.

Small but...

While the reduction is small, this shows that the FCDA mechanism to plant works and is a reliable tool to correct the effect of the peso exchange rate," Aquino said.

Engineer Edwardo Serena, chief regulator of MWSS-RO said the immediate implementation of the tariff mechanism was necessary for the MWCI to continue its payment of concession fees as well as its service expansion and improvement plans.

Commitment

Aquino said he Ono is committed to continue paying for the foreign exchange denominated concession fees to the MWSS, aiming to other financial obligations.

Manila Water's announcement of the cutback came as the peso depreciated more against the dollar yesterday.

But Joel Lamangan, corporate communications director of Manila Water assured the public that this would not affect the water rate cutback.

"It's not an immediate concern right now. We will have to worry about that in the next quarter. But we're confident that the peso will regain strength," he added.

LTFRB bucks new fare hikes, fare matrix extension

By Christa S. Reyes

THERE will be no new bus hikes for jeepneys and buses and no extension until the deadline on the display of their matrix.

This was what the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board stressed yesterday as it greeted public transport groups against overcharging consumers.

LTFRB Chief Maria Elena Bautista said starting today, jeepneys and buses found without a fare matrix would be slapped a fine of P500 for the first offense, P1,000 for the second offense and a cancellation of the franchise on the third offense.

Drivers and operators who do not honor the 20 percent discount for students, disabled and senior citizens would be slapped a penalty of P500 every time they are caught, she said.

The LTFRB has been assigned with over 200 complaints daily for a week now, most of them on overcharging.

Bautista asked the public to report such cases to the RTC's hotline...7890. She added the plate number or the driver's name must also be reported.

The LTFRB chief said that only half of the roughly 50,000 jeepney units in Metro Manila had secured a fare matrix as of yesterday morning.

It could be, she said, that half of the jeeps operating in the metropolis were illegal to operate in the "colorum."

She said all buses have secured their fare matrices.

"Even with only 50 percent compliance (on jeepneys), we won't be extending the memorandum. The only way to put a stop to the abuses on overcharging is to start penalizing," said Bautista.

A fare matrix costs P50 each. It outlines the minimum distances in each route and the additional kilometer thereafter. Each fare matrix is specifically issued to each jeepney or bus unit. The minimum fare has the plate number of the vehicle.

Checkpoint watch beefed up; Metro folk told to stay calm

By Leila B. Salaverria, Christian V. Esguerra and Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

POLICE have increased their watch at checkpoints put up in Metro Manila following the spate of explosions in Quezon City and in Makati, one of which left four people injured.

Philippine National Police spokesperson Chief Supt. Leopoldo Catapang assured that there was no reason to panic, but added that they are looking into the possibility that the blasts were part of an elaborate plot to terrorize residents and cause chaos in the metropolis.

"There are no indicators that the incidents were coordinated," National Capital Region Police Office director Hermilo De Leon said. "The incidents were not meant to harm but maybe to create an atmosphere of chaos."

Two grenades were thrown near Kamuning Market in Quezon City on Tuesday night but only one exploded, injuring four people, including two children. A few hours later, unidentified persons opened fire at a vehicle parked outside Makati's Dusit Thani La Hotel.

A truck was also damaged when another grenade lobbed from a passing car exploded near a gas station in nearby Pasig.

Thorough inspection

Western Police District spokesperson Chief Insp. Leroy Agustin said today that monitoring the checkpoints would be more thorough in their inspections, especially of heavy vehicles that cross-ride may use to avoid screening suspects.

Meanwhile, police districts earlier began implementing mobile checkpoints as a deterrent to crime.

A MOTORCYCLE-RIDING police team heads south on Epifanio Aguinaldo Avenue in Makati City. JOEY ARGUELLES

Police were also told to keep an eye out for men riding tandem in motorcycles since suspected grenade throwers had used them as getaway vehicles.

MPD director Chief Supt. Pedro Bulaong said his men would also continue with shopping mall security officials since these venues are among the possible targets of troublemakers.

The search on road intelligence in Manila like the Pasig an ml depot, the United States Embassy and the LRT stations have also been tightened. Critical areas also include the Batasan Complex, the Quezon City Circle, the Edsa Shrine, and even Malacañang's business district.

'Recruiters' monitored

Apart from checkpoints, additional operations by the Civil Disturbance Management have been deployed to Malabon City and Navotas following reports that suspected of presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr. were recruiting residents in to clash areas for their rallies.

Bulaong ordered his men to monitor Pramco told the locations to unusual activities of Poe's followers had been monitored so far.

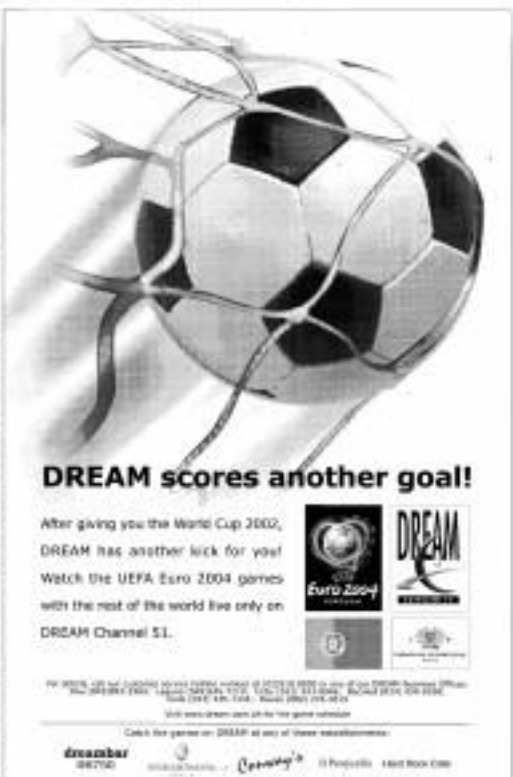
"We can't stop the recruitment, which is usually done discreetly. But we could prevent people without the necessary permits," said Bulaong about City police chief Fredelin Pineda.

Security had also been tightened for Poe and other public officials included in an alleged hit list of the communist New People's Army.

Apart from President Macapagal-Arroyo, Solicitor refused to name the other VIPs included in the list, but said the PNP's Police Security and Protection Office had already made security arrangements with these "targets."

Director Robert Delfin, PNP intelligence director, said the plot was discovered during PNP's investigation into recent attacks on the Shell and Petrosentro in Makati.

Poe's camp had dismissed the alleged plot as part of the administration's ploy to keep the presidential candidates from going around the country to find supporters.



Cops face raps for cutting off suspect's finger

By Carlo F. Gomez
PDI Forgot Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Local drug busters Senior Insp. Clarence Dongall and seven other policemen were charged administratively with grave misconduct before the National Police Commission (Napolcom) for allegedly cutting the finger of a suspected illegal drug retailer.

An investigator of the Napolcom recommended the filing of the complaint even though the City Prosecutor's Office and the Office of the Deputy Ombudsman for the Military dismissed similar administrative charges filed against them.

Sufficient grounds

Joseph Cello, Napolcom investigator, said he found sufficient ground to file the charge of grave misconduct against the eight policemen.

Charged with Dongall were SPO1 George Supanisa, PO2 Rudel Villanueva, PO2 Ronald Villamin, PO2 Willy Neves, PO2 Alvin Semillo, PO2 Bernardo Omana and PO2 Bonifilo Mahilo, all members of the Drug Enforcement Unit of the city police.

The complainant, Tony Dungon, a trader engaged in selling cell phone casings, sandals, bags and assorted dry goods, claimed he was robbed by Dongall of P100,000 in cash and jewelry on Oct. 22, 2002.

Dungon claimed that he was beaten up and his little finger was cut off with a jungle knife by Dongall during interrogation at the RCPO headquarters.

In his counter-affidavit, Dongall said Dungon was arrested by a joint team of the RCPO anti-drug unit and City Mobile Group in Barangay 21 during a drug buy-bust operation in 2002.

The raiders seized 100.49 grams of methamphetamine hydrochloride (shabu).

Dongall said Dungon resisted arrest before he was subdued and brought to Police Station 6 Headquarters on board a motorcycle with side cap.

He said he saw then that Dungon had no injury in the left hand and he ordered his men to bring him to the Bacolod Sanitarium and Hospital.

Confession

At the medical facility, Dongall said Dungon confessed to him that he was a drug retailer and even offered to act as guide in future anti-drug operations against a certain Mike, whom he tagged as a supplier.

Dongall denied having robbed the complainant of P100,000 and assorted jewelry, saying it was plain harassment.

But Napolcom's Cello, in his pre-charge investigation, said Dungon was arrested "in violation of the buy-bust rule" and his questioning without counsel and right to preliminary investigation was a "gross violation of the rules on criminal procedure."

The handcuffed Dungon was detained inside a room, tortured and forced to admit a crime, Cello said.

He also said Dungon was threatened by Dongall that his finger will be cut off if he did not cooperate with them. When the suspect refused to admit the crime, the small finger of his left hand was severed by Dongall, he said.

ROUTINE CHECK
Inmates at the provincial jail of Ilocos Sur in Vigan City go through routine inspection June 17.

C. Luzon teachers say no to 'bridge' program

By Jun Malig
PDI General Luzon Desk

ANGELES CITY—A group of teachers in Central Luzon has asked the Department of Education to abandon the controversial bridge program and scrap its national implementation starting this school year.

Officials of the Alliance of Concerned Teachers-Central Luzon (ACT-CL) said the bridge program "does not address the root causes of the deteriorating quality of education in the country's public schools."

Fabian Dathil, ACT-CL secretary general, asked teachers, parents and students in the region "to continue protesting the government and the DepEd" to abandon the bridge program.

Amid protests, Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus decided to make the bridge program optional for incoming high school freshmen.

His decision gave parents of public elementary graduates who failed the High School Readiness Test (HSRT) the option to enroll their children in the bridge program or in regular high school.

But Dathil said De Jesus' decision was meant only to appease the protesting parents and teachers.

"The DepEd might still have the implementation of the irrational and anti-poor program when pressure against it slackened," he said.

The one-year pre-high school bridge program "would only add to the financial burden of the students and parents who are already distressed by today's high cost of living," he said.

The program, which seeks to improve the students' knowledge of English, Mathematics and Science, "will never address the low quality of education," he said.

De Jesus, in an earlier statement, said the bridge program was "a way of addressing a 64-year oversight."

"It goes back to the public school students who had been taken away from them by the 1948 education reform law. We already had an 11-year basic education cycle until this law reduced elementary schooling from seven to six years," he said.

De Jesus, however, said the second part of the reform, which was the addition of two years to high school, was never implemented.

"The intent was to establish a basic education cycle of 12 and not 10 years: Six years of elementary school, three years of junior, and three years of senior, high school, which is the structure in many countries today," he said in the statement.

GenSan dads seek probe of smuggling of Korean cars

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The city council wants local port authorities, including the Bureau of Customs, to shed light on the rampant smuggling of imported used cars from South Korea through the Makar Port.

Councilor Edwardo Lopena Sr., chair of the committee on public safety and police matters, said council members had been alarmed by the rampant smuggling of cars through the port.

These illegal activities could not have happened without the involvement of some port officials, particularly those from the customs bureau, he said.

Last week, 34 used vehicles illegally imported from South Korea were seized by members of the Joint Task Force (JTF) Gantlets led by Col. Edgardo Garina.

The vehicles, crushed inside nine 40-foot container vans, were opened Wednesday in the presence of Angelo Reyes, head of the National Anti-Smuggling Task Force (NatAST).

The cargo, with an estimated value of P20 million, was earlier declared containing of used kitchen utensils and fishing gear.

Garina warned that the vans he impounded pending inspection by the JTF Gantlets and Customs officials.

Members of the local anti-smuggling task force found that the consignees of the contraband were fictitious. Nobody showed up at the Makar Port to claim the cargo.

Last week's incident was the fourth time smugglers used the port to smuggle in contraband.

Four months ago, more than 40 slightly used Kia Pride and Hyundai sedans were intercepted in separate operations launched by the members of the task force.

Aquiles Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

9/11 commission finds no evidence of al-Qaida links to Saddam

From page A1

unconfirmed intelligence report that Mohamed Atta, ringleader of the 19 Sept. 11 hijackers, had met in Prague, Czech Republic, with a senior Iraqi intelligence official before the attacks.

The commission concluded there was no such meeting.

Political liability

The latest findings, which came less than five months before the US presidential election, raised fresh doubts about Bush's decision to invade Iraq and gave Democrats an opportunity to exploit an issue that already had become a political liability for the Republicans.

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry said the report's findings were evidence the "administration misled America and the administration misled media."

"They did not tell the truth to America about what was happening or their own intentions," Kerry said.

Asked about the commission report, Secretary of State Colin Powell said the administration stood by its assertions that there were links between al-Qaida and Iraq.

"I think we have said, and it is clear, that there is a connection, and we have seen those connections between al-Qaida and the regime of Saddam Hussein and we stick with that," Powell said in an interview on the al-Jazeera television network. "We have not said it was evidenced in 9/11."

The White House also released another 9/11 2002 letter from the CIA to the Senate intelligence committee, citing "solid reporting" of contacts between Iraq and al-Qaida "going back a decade" as well as "credible" reports that al-Qaida had sought common ground with Iraq who might help the terrorist network acquire the capability to use weapons of mass destruction.

"Credible information indicates that Iraq and al-Qaida have discussed safe haven and reciprocal nonaggression," says the CIA letter, which was released by Cheney's office. The letter said much of the information came from detainees, including some of high rank.

The commission report said that Bin Ladin, then in Sudan, met with an Iraqi intelligence officer in 1994 to explore space for al-Qaida training camps and assistance in obtaining weapons. "But Iraq apparently never responded." The meeting occurred even though Bin Ladin opposed Saddam's secular government and had sponsored anti-Saddam uprisings in Iraq's Kurdish region.

The findings were released as the commission began its final two days of hearings on the Sept. 11 terror attacks. Thursday's hearing will focus on the Federal Aviation Administration and US air defenses. The commission's final report is due on July 26.

Much larger attack

In his closing denial, the commission also said that al-Qaida had envisioned a much larger attack in September 2001 and that the terror network was working hard to strike again.

According to the report, al-Qaida is seriously trying to replicate the destruction of that day even though the terror network had been weakened when it lost its Afghan sanctuary and many of its leaders to US strikes and arrests.

Al-Qaida is also trying to obtain a nuclear weapon and is "increasingly interested" in chemical, radiological and biological attacks, including the use of anthrax, it added.

"The bond formed among the attackers and between them and Bin Ladin was strong and lasted even after the operation was complete," the report said.

New York Times tells Bush to apologize

From page A1

was his effort to link his war of choice with the battle against terrorists worldwide."

The conclusions of the independent panel dealt another blow to Bush's justification for overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime.

"This is not just a matter of the president's demanding credibility although that's disturbing enough," The New York Times said.

AFP

The editorial said there were two possible explanations to what it described as Bush's "false claim to threatness."

"There are two unpleasant alternatives: Either Mr. Bush knew he was not telling the truth, or he has a capacity for politically motivated self-deception that is terrifying in the post-9/11 world," The New York Times said. **AFP**

Bin Ladin rejected that plan as too complex, deciding instead on four aircraft piloted by handpicked suicide operatives. The report said the targets were chosen based on symbolism: the Pentagon, which represented the US military; the World Trade Center, a symbol of American economic strength; the Capitol, the perceived source of US support for Israel, and the White House. Training for the attacks began in 1999.

The attacks were planned for as early as May 2001, but they were pushed back to September, partly because al-Qaida sought to strike when Congress would be in session at the Capitol.

A second wave of hijackings, seven masterminded because Mohammed was too busy planning the Sept. 11 attacks, according to the report.

Exasperation

Commission member Bob Kerrey, a former Democratic senator from Nebraska, expressed exasperation that the government did not act with greater urgency against Bin Ladin, given what was known about al-Qaida before 2001.

"I believe that we missed a tremendous opportunity very early in the game to inform the Congress, inform the American people who Bin Ladin was, what he was doing, what he had done and as a consequence I think are simply didn't rally until it was too late," Kerrey said.

The camps that were established in Afghanistan after Bin Ladin moved there in 1996 produced as many as 20,000 al-Qaida operatives and second-tier trainees in "think extensively about ways to commit mass murder," the report said.

Some of the trainees included training over a missile launcher and hoping Rumsfeld for fire a rocket device at the United States, the report said.

Bishop's litany . . .

From page A1

pointed out. "Corruption, a cancer in our national life, is one prime example of what must be unanimously fought."

The highlight of the commemorative festivities are Holy Masses and processions organized by the Apostleship of Prayer (AP), a pastoral group specially dedicated to the Sacred Heart. A iconic image of the Blessed Church will be offered by Bishop Teodoro Bacani with several other priests including Fr. Roy Dumpit, AP national spiritual director.

The CBCP exhorted all Filipinos to practice "an ever nation with a resilient vision" the month. It first Friday devotion to the Heart of Jesus. The statement quoted the late Pope Paul VI: "The call sustained in the Sacred Heart is the most efficacious means to contribute to the spiritual and moral renewal of the world."

A census preceding today's commemoration brought the AP to participating government offices nationwide. But since November last year, the CBCP has led the flock in first Friday novenas Masses. The novena ends July 2.

Twice consecrated

The CBCP consecrated the country to the Heart of Jesus for the second time on Nov. 22, 2000 during a Eucharistic celebration at the Manila Cathedral. The first time was in 1956. Then President Ramon Magsaysay led the dedication at the closing rites of the Second National Eucharistic Congress in Luneta.

It was the Jesuits who brought the devotion to the Philippines in 1872. The first three school centers were Ateneo de Manila, La Consolata College and Colegio de Sta. Isabel, and the first affiliated parishes were Angono and Nuestra Señora de Natividad in Molino.

The devotion has long been practiced. In olden times, the doctors and fathers of the Church, the saints, and the devout faithful professed a special reverence for the wound in the side of the crucified Christ piercing a Roman soldier's lance on Mt. Calvary. It is said Jesus himself appeared in the last half of the 17th century to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, then a nun of the Visitation Order in Paray-le-Monial, France, to give the explicit mandate to propagate the devotion.

Over time the cult has grown, so that now is practically all Christian countries, it flourishes to churches, among religious orders and in the homes of the faithful. St. John Eudes, who founded the Congregation of Jesus and Mary in 1643, is considered its first apostle.

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mourning stunned gas or cyanide attacks against Jewish areas in Iran, releasing poisons gas into a building ventilation system—and "last, but not least, hijacking an aircraft and crashing it into an airport or nearby city."

The Sept. 11 plot gradually evolved from Mohammed's original vision but was hardly a continuous operation, the commission report said. Mohammed, who is in US custody at an undisclosed overseas location, wanted up to 20 operatives for the four-plane plot, but at least 10 of them were prevented from entering the United States because of visa problems, hostile objections and other reasons.

AP

Roseller T. Lim ...

From page A1

door, Marcos paid a "friendly" visit to the Zamboanguito estate. Ros likewise knew that the Government Service Insurance System was behaving like most large on Lim's frozen funds were the interests of that firm, they could not even afford to keep up the amortization on their funds).

In elegant mestizo's English, punctuated with a touch of Spanish and to equally elegant statesman's language, Lim refused. But after Marcos left, he let out a string of invectives in unpolished Tagalog.

"I hate a witness to that visit," Lim's daughter, Rosario, told the inquirer. "Daddy was mad. I think it was at that moment that he decided to do what he had to do."

The following day, at the party meeting house before the vote, Lim offered to filibuster to buy time for the Nacionalistas until the arrival of Mendoza.

For 18 hours and 30 minutes, he stood there talking, until just a few minutes

Stop canvassing, Poe ally asks SC

From page A1

could submit its report on the canvass.

"To complete the legal presentation, it is by no means concluded formally until the Presidential could the 12th Congress too special session merely to receive the report of the joint committee," he said.

The opposition earlier asked the high court to stop the canvass, claiming that the provision of the joint committee was questionable.

But in a unanimous decision on June 8, the tribunal junked the petition of Davao City Rep. Ruy Elias Lopez "on the ground that it failed to show that Congress grossly abused its discretion" in creating the committee.

Underfire

At yesterday's session, Pimentel lacked Sen. Francis Pangilinan to quit as co-chair of the joint committee so as not to further delay the canvass.

Pangilinan came under fire from minority members when he failed to satisfy the point of order raised by Senator Rep. Francis Escudero on whether the committee should open the election returns (ERs) of certain provinces if these requirements for doing so were present.

Pangilinan said the committee had decided that the ERs could be opened specifically provided for such an action, especially when the returns or abnormalities cast doubt on the authenticity of the certificate of canvass (COC) and affected the ERs of a particular province.

But he stressed that this was his own view and did not bind the committee. He said that in the end, it was the committee as a whole that would decide through voting.

To this, Pimentel said, "Are you sure that the members of your committee may not misinterpret what you have just said? I only intend to say 'This is my ruling on the application/policy of the law'?

"Now if the members of your majority do not assume you in your view, I think you have a problem. You can always change your post."

Pangilinan replied: "I am sure that there was no need to ask for his resignation because he did not want his position in the first place.

"Believe me, Senator Pimentel, this job is not easy," Pangilinan said. "For years then willing to give this up if anybody wishes to take my place. I'm only doing my job the best way I think I can. If it's not even good enough for everyone, I'm sorry I apologize."

Continuing objection

Opposition lawyers manifested their continuing objection to the tabulation of CoC No. 1 (Pulilan Misamis Oriental).

Escudero said the returns in the figures appearing in the municipal tally were not signed and countersigned by members of the Board of Canvassers, contrary to poll laws. He said this was why there was a need to examine the ERs.

A similar heated exchange erupted between Negros Oriental Rep. Jacinto Paras and Siquijor Rep. Florencio Quiz).

Paras said the ERs of Misamis Oriental

LAWYER Rufus Rodriguez speaks to reporters after filing a petition in the Supreme Court seeking to stop the ongoing presidential canvass in Congress. RON CASTRO

should be opened because of Escudero's observations, but Abad countered that ERs could only be opened before the Presidential could be opened before the Presidential could only be opened before the Presidential could only be opened before the Presidential could only

Pancake House buys Dencio's for P160M

PUBLICLY listed restaurant and coffee chain Pancake House Inc. completes its buyout of Dencio's Food Specialties Inc. today.

Pancake House spent P160 million to acquire Dencio's Food Specialties, a unit of Dencio's Food Corp. that operates the Dencio's restaurants and other franchises.

Pancake bought Dencio's using a P200-million term loan from the Metropolitan Bank and Trust Co.

Cecile Macaraig, director for corporate planning of Pancake House, said there were plans in the pipeline to revitalize and repackage Dencio's, rebrands it to the market, review its menu and store design and quality standards.

Macaraig added that the company was committed to invest another P150 million on top of the P160 million acquisition cost, to finance its business strategies, fund expansion programs and to build a new commissary dedicated to service Dencio's food requirements.

Its expansion plans include the opening of 20 company-owned outlets and 14 franchise branches in three years. The current network of stores consists of three company-owned outlets and 13 franchise stores.

These programs were expected to increase Dencio's system sales from P400 million in 2004 to P900 million in three years.

Pancake House Inc. acquired the Pancake House chain over three years ago and turned the network around with a steady and profitable network of 40 restaurants.

From P200 million under the previous management, system sales increased to P500 million in 2003 under Pancake House Inc.

₱5.3-B TAX CREDIT SCAM

More witnesses seek immunity

By Michelle V. Ramos

MORE witnesses in the P5.3-billion tax credit scam are coming forward to help the government recover taxes that have dropped on its lap years.

The case after the Office of the Ombudsman granted immunity to couple Felix and Norma Gaughan in exchange for their cooperation in the investigation of the tax scam.

The tax credit scam was allegedly perpetrated by Felix's brother Reuben, some duty-free stores and some top officials of the Department of Finance.

Atty. Victorio Centeno, chairman of Special Presidential Task Force 126, said his office remains amended the granting of immunity to the four more individuals were holding vital information needed to resolve the graft case.

At least five more have pending applications for immunity with the office of the Ombudsman, he said.

"Witnesses are slowly coming forward and manifesting their cooperation with the government," Centeno told reporters.

"The closer their confidence in the government of the task force to prosecute those involved in the credit scam," he added.

He said the four individuals were former employees of Del Sur corporation who were allegedly involved in defrauding the government of about P600 million in the 1990s to 2000.

Centeno declined to reveal the two companies.

The TFC was created to investigate cases of graft and corruption, and retain custody of the public assets of public officials, he said.

BIR to tighten audit of telcos' VAT payments

sales of prepaid cards were not reflected separately as these transactions. Instead, the amount is lumped together with sales of other products. This prevents the BIR from determining the amount of sales from prepaid cards, which is the basis for computing the 10-percent VAT.

"There is a reason to suspect the telecom industry is not remitting the right amount of VAT because there is no separate booking for sales of prepaid cards," the BIR official said.

"Malacañang's disapproval of the plan to use banking circulation to engage the BIR to strengthen its VAT collection may help us," the finance official said, adding that plugging tax leakages from VAT abuse could greatly help raise government revenues.

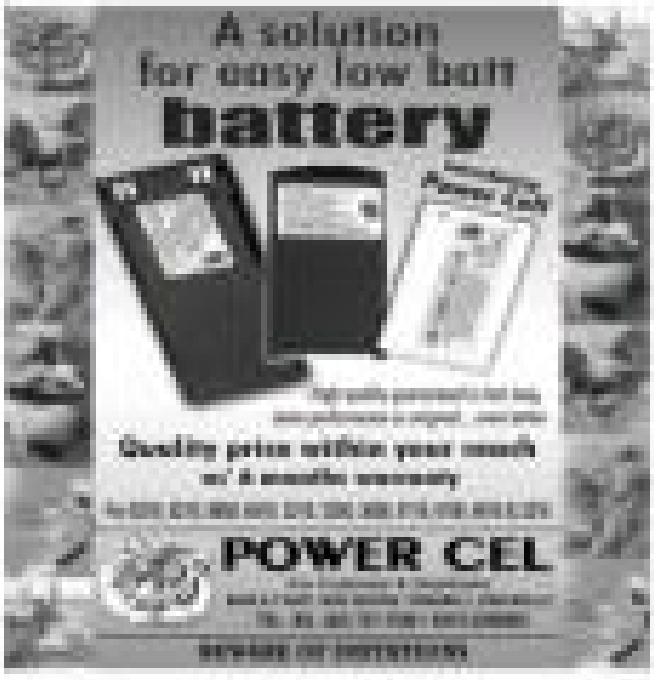
According to a recent study by the National Tax Research Center, the government lost P70 billion per year from uncollected VAT from 1998 to 2002 due to deficiencies among corporate taxpayers and weak collection powers of the BIR.

The plan to tax trading was included in the agenda being proposed by the government's economic team for the next administration. It was supposed to help offset to additional revenues to solve the government's serious financial problem.

The plan, however, was shot down by both the Congress and Malacañang due to strong opposition from the public.

According to a revenue memo prepared by the DOF, the taxes that were being considered were one centavo, 30 centavos and 20 centavos per text message. Estimates showed that the government would generate an additional P600 million per year with a one-centavo per text message; P1.89 billion 30-centavos; and P1.26 billion, 20 centavos.

The DOF was hoping the plan to tax texting would be implemented to help raise the government's budget deficit, which is expected to reach P197.8 billion by year-end.



VARGAS REAL ESTATE SEMINARS
July 16 — FORECLOSURE: HOW TO PREVENT AND REMEDY
July 17 — INSTALLMENT SALES: WHAT U NEED TO KNOW
LIBRA INSTITUTE OF REAL ESTATE

Power rates seen to rise in 18 mos

By Abigail L. Hu

ALBAY, Bicol—Rates for consumers for another round of power rate increases, particularly within the next 18 months, as the government is preparing to hike rates of the National Power Corp. to more "competitive" levels.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez yesterday admitted that Napocor rates were far from "competitive," making it loses billions each and every month with each passing year.

While the state-run firm has not yet released official 2003 net loss figures, estimates of the losses range up to more than P100 billion.

Napocor in 2002 posted a net loss of close to P75 billion, the latest amount the power firm stood as its red ink got out to in 2003.

Perez said the state firm's ballooning losses was one of the factors that pushed government to assume P900 billion of Napocor's P1.3-trillion debt.

"We can't sustain the losses anymore," Perez yesterday told reporters during the inauguration of the Luzon Hydro Feasibility Study here. "Napocor is losing P100 billion a year. It's a drag on the government deficit. It's increasing our loans. So, we really need to take some painful decisive action, and we need to look at how we can make the cost of electricity reasonable."

He said the government's decision to assume P900 billion of Napocor's obligations was a painful decision on the part of the administration, but it had to be done if the state firm were to stay afloat.

But while the government decision to shoulder almost half of Napocor's debts would save the state firm as much as P8 billion in interest charges, Perez said the hide-off would be others expenses same to assure "competitive" levels.

"The solutions we see include the absorption of debts and the removal of subsidies collected on our current new investors for new capacity," he explained. "We need to have rates that are more attractive. We have to have rates that are competitive. The competitive rate have to be upgraded within the next 18 months."

The Energy Regulatory Commission recently approved higher generation charges for Napocor starting with its May 26 to June 25 billing period.

With these new charges in effect, power users in Luzon will have to pay 16 centavos more per kilowatt-hour (kWh) at P2.20 from the present rate of P2.14.

Visayas customers will now have to pay P2.32 per kWh, up 23 centavos from the old rate of P2.09 per kWh. Mindanao electricity users will soon be charged 20 centavos higher per kWh to P1.92 from P1.72.

The hike in generation cost will affect power distribution existing wires or all of their supply requirements from Napocor, as well as consumers directly connected to the state firm.

Since the Lopez-led Meralco Electric Co. is Napocor's biggest customer, accounting for 45 percent of the state firm's total energy sales in 2003, the increase in generation charges will eventually redound to higher electricity rates for Meralco consumers.

The increases in Napocor's rates, however, is likely to reflect in Meralco's bills four to six months from now as the power distributor will still have to file a new generation cost adjustment mechanism (GRAM) application with the ERC covering the May-July period.

The company is now in the process of preparing its GRAM application for the period from February to April.

Meralco's most recent ERC-approved GRAM picked up power rates this month by 13.27 centavos per kWh.

More upward adjustments in Napocor's generation rates within the next 18 months will result in even more power rate hikes for electricity users nationwide.

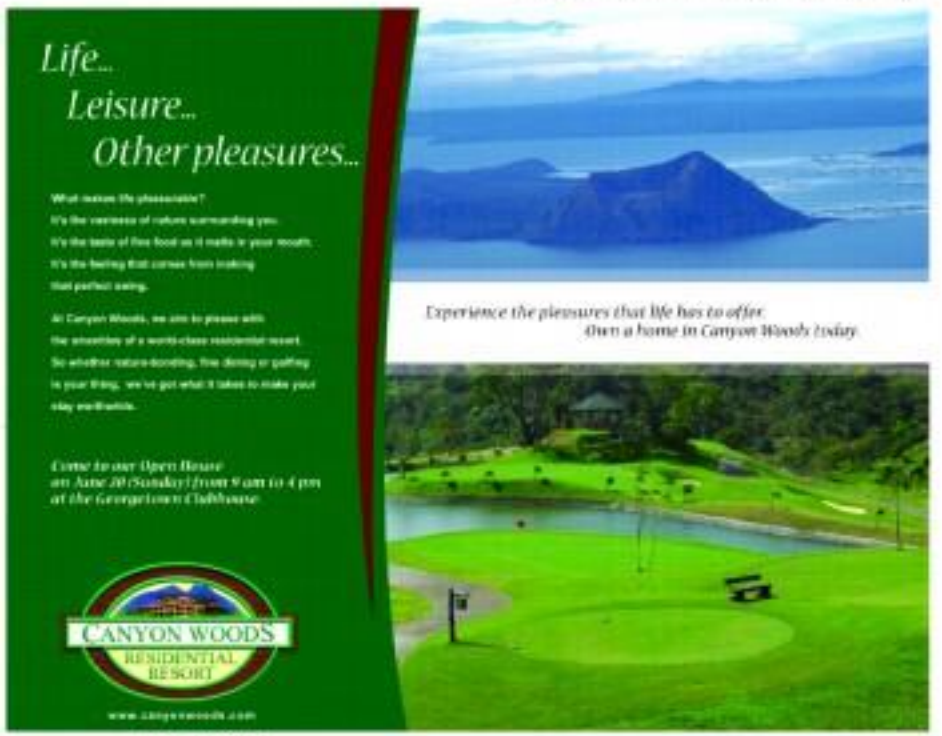
While he admitted that it might be painful for the government to implement, Perez said the rate hike was the way to go, as there was no way Napocor could stay afloat in the long-term.

"We must fix the problem now and focus on industry that should be self-competitive in the end of the decade," he said.

Apart from hiking rates, he said other solutions that the government was looking at to plug the Napocor money sluice was the conversion of competitive bid procurement and the privatization of the state firm.

He said President Macapagal-Arroyo had allotted an 18-month timeframe for the completion of the privatization process, within which Napocor rates would have to be increased to attract potential investors.

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp., the agency tasked to dispose of Napocor's generation assets, had placed 35 power plants on the auction block.



NTC approves Smart plan to acquire Piltel's debts

Halt in trade of Semirara stocks sought

By Clarissa S. Batino

SEMIRARA Mining Corp. yesterday asked the Philippine Stock Exchange to suspend trading of its shares after the firm filed a request with corporate regulators to restructure its capital.

The planned capital restructuring aims to erase the company's accumulated deficit to retained earnings of P1.62 billion, revise and extend 126,000 preferred shares, and build up new capital for the company.

The PSE said effective yesterday, the company's shares were indefinitely suspended. It last traded at 98 centavos apiece in December 2003.

Semirara, the largest coal producer in the country, also asked the PSE on Fri the suspension over the Securities and Exchange Commission approves its restructuring plan.

Under its proposal, Semirara will decrease its authorized capital to P21.37 million from P1.16 billion.

The firm also wants to decrease its outstanding capital stock to P5.34 million from P1.62 billion to common shares. The shares will be used to partially eliminate its deficit of P1.62 billion.

168CI Holdings, which owns about 76 percent of the company, will subscribe to 29.68 million common shares at P1.05 per share for a total of P28.64 million.

Semirara was incorporated on Feb. 26, 1980 to explore, develop and mine the coal resources on Semirara Island in Antique. In 2003, it accounted for 98 percent of total domestic coal production. *Elizabeth L. Sanchez*

In Bayan, small businesses see the light of day

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TO PET food on the table, iling Rosalie dreams would collect bulks of used paper, plastic, glass bottles and aluminum cans from some of the numerous dumpsites in Metro Manila.

Aling Rosalie, with the help of her husband who used to be a supervisor at Smoke Philippines, would then sell the scrap she had gathered to a low mansion serving Pinoy in Manila.

No less four children and husband, the sale of scrap had been their bread and butter for years.

In 2001, Aling Rosalie met with a microfinance officer from MBAGBN Bayan Foundation. She was able to secure a loan to start a business.

Thirteen loans cycles later, iling Rosalie was able to put up Carmen's Scrap Shop, which can now collect more scrap with two trucks crushing through greater Metro Manila.

Aling Rosalie is one of the many beneficiaries of MBAGBN Bayan, the micro-lending arm of ABS-CBN Foundation Inc. (ABFI).

25 poor women

In 1993, SFI funded a microcredit project for 25 poor women and mothers to provide livelihood in Quezon City. Small loans were used as capital for micro-enterprises, such as food vending, petty trading and home-scale manufacturing.

The project was originally for the poorest, 609 launched MBAGBN Bayan as a full development program in May 1997.

It started with two branches in Tondo and San Quezon City. It later expanded operations to Batong, La Union, with the help of a corporate partner, the Batong Private Power Plant and, to the northern part of Quezon City, with patent from MBAGBN Broadcasting Corp.

From an outreach of 969 families in December 1997, MBAGBN Bayan has served 45,000 families by mid-1999.

To date, it has 10 branches in Metro Manila and the provinces, including Pampanga and Mindanao, servicing 26,717 clients as of April this year.

P1.7 billion in loans

With the widespread support for the project, MBAGBN Bayan aggressively pursued the program to officially registered with the BIC as a separate non-stock, non-profit organization in January 2000.

Brian Royal, executive director for ABS-CBN Bayan, said that as of March this year, the Foundation has disbursed almost P1.7 billion in loans, funded by a combination of borrowings from non-government organizations, government agencies, corporate partners, a local government partner, and from regular personal loan interest income.

This year, the Foundation was able to provide P171 million in loans to several individuals.

All those working to secure loans are digitally screened.

"The decline a money family or son that is able to provide for its present needs, for its future needs and one that is able to reach out to others," Royal said.

In other words, Royal said, they are looking for "a family that is compassionate."

"One can only be compassionate if it is able to provide for itself," he explained.

Why women?

Royal said the foundation offers values and skills training to families, aside from providing loans.

"Skills training is not gratuit," he said. "It has to be seen operable."

Royal explained that if a person loans for a personal need, it would be worthwhile for the person to learn how to process fish. The same goes for a person who loves to farm chickens.

"Most promising women are [That would be most productive]," he said.

Marcial dela Peña, operations manager for the foundation, said they are also organizing women to lead microfinance in their respective communities. Of their total clients, 26,464 are women and 3,311 are men.

"We have fielded leaders, or in-barrio organizations of women in a community," dela Peña said.

"What we want? Because they are usually the underemployed or unemployed."

That's the technical answer," Royal said. "Women are more responsible. Whatever they earn advances in the family, whereas men are often they earn, a lot diverted."

In pursues self-sufficiency among families, ABS-CBN Bayan expenses "Financial Sustainability" and "Steady Strengthening," or programs that provide credit, savings, micro-insurance, capacity building activities, leadership and business management.

ABS-CBN Bayan has partnered with various corporations and organizations to expand its reach.

It have have supported MBAGBN Bayan in expanding its areas of operation to reach 50,000 micro entrepreneurs by 2008.

PHOTO selling plastic wares and houses. Lorenzo Cardoso expanded his source of livelihood to selling kitchenware and dry goods. With the help of Bayan, Cardoso now has two stalls in Tandang, Quezon City.

MONEY Shirley de Vera counts coins selling stands and merienda to various schools in Batong, La Union. After securing loans from Bayan in 1999, she now operates her own cafeteria, selling groceries on the side.

Select blue chips dip

STOCKS yesterday fell on profit-taking in select blue chips, like telecoms leader PLDT and second-ranked Globe Telecom Inc., as political concerns kept most players out for the holidays.

Investors held off the slow pace of the congressional counting of votes for president and vice president continued to dampen market sentiment.

A Supreme Court decision which shot down a proposed new power rate hike by the largest power distributor, Manila Electric Co. (Meralco), also helped drag the market lower for a second straight day.

The Philippine stock index declined 2.34 points, 0.23 percent, lower at 1,039.95 points on the value turnover of 298.91 million pesos ($5.33 million).

In the broader market, gainers beat losers 93 to 26.

"Ongoing political uncertainties kept most market players or fore, resulting in the general indecisiveness of most investors," said AME Securities stocks analyst Edwin Mendoza.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) slipped P30 or

P1,095, on profit-taking, second leg so-so after.

In chief rival Globe Telecom slid P5 to P840.

Meralco-B fell 1.67 percent or 50 centavos to P29.50, despite the company's projection that it would still meet its profit target even though its rate increase had been blocked.

The Supreme Court ruled that energy regulators had been wrong to grant a 12-centavo-per-kilowatt rate increase and that Meralco had violated provisions of the law including failure to publish its application for the rate hike.

"The Supreme Court's decision provided an excuse for market players to sell down shares ... and brought it (main index) lower than the 1,548 support floor," Mendoza said. *Reuters*

Martel saga: Kids side with Dad

LOS BANOS: Pleas last Sobbie Martel is "the dreaded husband from hell, a tight-fisted husband and with money who once shot his driver for a mere parking infraction," according to the ex-parte testimony of Martel's estranged wife, Melissa Mercado Martel.

But despite the father's supposed lurid character defects, the three Martel children have chosen to stay with their dad, in defiance of a court order assigning the custody of the two minors to the wife.

And, in a public rebuke, the three Martel kids even individually wrote the Makati Regional Trial Court judge to chronicle their mother's alleged vices.

We will spare you the sordid details in the kids' letters, but there is one anecdote that spoke of a public incident involving their mother, written by the eldest, that, if true, shows that she is not much different from the father in the gun-toting department.

"My father has never physically abused me nor any of my siblings," said Paula Roberta Martel, 15. "He has never threatened us or used violence against us, unlike my mother, who once even pointed me with a gun outside the International School campus and caused a huge scandal."

"My grandfather's (Mr. Antonio Martel) security had to form a human barricade to protect us against my mother," added the young Martel, who is the publisher of the nascent magazine C5.

On case you are wondering why even the kids have bodyguards, it is an offshoot of the 1995 kidnapping of the Martel patriarch.)

Not intimidating the children's testimonies aplenty, the Makati RTC judge Rebecca Rodriguez, removed her ex-parte (meaning the judge heard only the petitioner, the mother, but not the husband and their children) order that the two eldest Martel children, one of whom is enrolled in the United States, leave their father and live with their mother.

In addition to being barred from any contact with the wife, Bobbie Martel has been ordered to post a P5.8 million power bond, a curb underscoring that the respondent has failed to post since the judge issued the order on May 6, claiming he only receives a P100,000/month salary for his job at the family's Bacnotan Plants.

The good news is that the Martel patriarch, Don Antonio Martel, is arriving next week from the United States where he has lived, most of the time, after the 1995 kidnapping to offer a financial settlement to his daughter-in-law and hopefully keep peace for the family.

If the properties is current, then, in the end, it all boils down to money.

2005 in 2004

IMAGE: a leaf from Edvard Kerspeon re-

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

considers, the Ford Motor ownership started a flare in local automotive marketing history, marketing a 2005 model Cutlas even though we are only midway through 2004.

Even better, the 2005 edition is cheaper, despite the pesos continuing weakness, than the previous edition that it replaced.

For instance, the Cutlas Classic is pegged at P1.19 million, as against last year's P1.209 million for the similar Cutlas Elite.

The Cutlas Superior has a retailing of P1.29 million, versus the P1.409 million of the previous Brougham model. In addition, the Superior features all leather seats and improved rear legroom, plus a return to the more subdued look that made the Cutlas a hit among the orphaned Toyota Crown fans.

And, in a bid for medium-level cars, the Superior has been installed with 200 power ponies, similar to those found in higher BMW and Mercedes Benz models.

"At these price ranges, we are actually the most competitive of the so-called Big Three," Nissan spokesperson Raymond Tolabing said, referring to the top three automotive companies, including Toyota and Honda, in the Philippines.

Circulation secrets

THE INDUSTRY'S circulation figures, this time coming from another broadsheet, confirmed what we have been reporting all along.

According to the market survey, the combined daily circulation of the No. 2 and No. 3 broadsheets equals the total daily circulation of, ahem, the industry leader.

Heard through the grapevine:

A MOVE detector who had been entrusted with several millions of pesos by the PDU camp has been missing since last month, along with the cash that was supposed to have been distributed among the party's campaign volunteers and election watchers.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

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Napocor sale a test for RP economy

FOR only assets of a debt-strapped power firm losing P6 million a day in a country dogged by corruption, political instability and regulatory uncertainty.

Then everyone stood set aside to ensure the Philippines could hit a power scare within three years and the government is keen to pave way by privatizing $3.6-billion Sudigas debtor.

Analysts say there is no more important task for the next Philippine administration, but potential buyers of state-owned National Power Corp.'s (Napocor) generation and transmission assets are not exactly breaking down the door.

"The power sector is a microcosm of what's ailing the country," said a former senior Napocor official, whose skepticism about the chances of a successful sale without deeper reforms.

Experts say there are profits to be made, but that is being outweighed by bottlenecks caused by debt, regulatory and political uncertainty, highlighted by the squabbling in Congress that is holding up the counting of votes from the May 10 election.

Filipinos and foreign investors are still waiting to see whether President Macapagal-Arroyo or movie hero Fernando Poe Jr. will win.

Stalled sale

The privatization of Napocor's transmission assets, valued by the government at $2 billion, was meant to go through last year but stalled on a lack of interest. It has sold off only two chunks of its generating capacity, also valued at $2 billion, which accounts for three-quarters of national capacity.

Even if the government drops its price, which many analysts think it must, continued items such as fees, payout formats—the only bidder for the transmission assets last year—will be vary.

In 2001, the Supreme Court ordered Singapore's Keppel Group to turn over a deposit it had rejected and from operating for seven years in the Philippines is a good.

A round-table set-post in Manila is standing idle after the Macapagal administration tore up a contract that German export-operator Dynport AG signed with the previous government.

"Definitely, the government needs to address that and restore investors' confidence in the sanctity of contract in particular," said Brian Grinsel, director of Southeast Asia infrastructure at the Manila-based Asian Development Bank.

Investor interest

More looming natural for Napocor assets should emerge it an expected, Ms Macapagal is declared the winner by from 30, he said.

But with power firms snapping a strong global market in demand from China fighters energy supply, others question why foreign providers would risk a major foray in the Philippines without more deep-seated reforms or firm deadlines.

The government has much to gain by privatizing Napocor, whose losses and debts have rocketed since the 1997 Asian economic crisis and created a crisis in power demand and the power output.

The IMF has warned that Napocor's losses, to be funded by $1.5 billion in sovereign-guaranteed bonds this year, are keeping the Philippines stuck in its twin deficit and debt traps. Government debt was 77 percent of GDP at the end of 2003 but public debt, which includes Napocor, was a huge 123 percent.

Earlier, Mr Macapagal's spokesperson said the government had decided to "bite the bullet" and assume Napocor's debt worth P500 billion, up from P200 billion previously planned, in an apparent bid to speed its sale.

Mixed signals

The next day, however, the Supreme Court's ombudsman issued investor concerns by blocking a plan by the biggest electricity distributor, Manila Electric Co., to raise rates by 1 percent. Consumer groups had campaigned against it.

Peter Wallace, president of the Manila-based Wallace Business Forum consultancy, said: "If the court decision undermines investments and business but it doesn't at all. This is coming through down into a tunnel."

Filipinos are angry that they have some of the region's highest power rates, a legacy of the early 1990s, when widespread blackouts prompted the desperate government to guarantee attractive returns for independent power firms.

The government, reform hinders power prices are partly to blame for Napocor's woes, would need courage to allow prices to rise. But Wallace and others say that setbacks should not be used to put reforms on the back burner.

"In the next five years, consumers will realize they have to pay more to attract investment or face a return of brownouts," he said.

Reuters

Plan to convert BOT deals to BOO backed

By Abigail L. Ho

AGUILAR, Pangasinan—To help keep National Power Corp. afloat, the government is planning to convert power projects under build-operate-transfer (BOT) agreements into build-operate-own (BOO) schemes.

In an interview on the sidelines of the inauguration of the Luzon Hydro-Pangasinan Bridge here, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez yesterday said this conversion scheme was one of the many options that the government was looking at to plug the Napocor money drain.

Other options being considered included the continuation of a competitive bid procurement system for Napocor's plants, the privatization of the state firm's generation assets and the lifting of rates to create "competitive" levels.

In an earlier interview, Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) vice president Fredesa Tamayo explained that converting BOT projects into BOO would give Napocor savings on capacity payments.

The savings proposition has yet to be made but the BOT contracts to be negotiated for possible conversion involved about $3 billion.

To undertake this conversion process, the government had to have a nonbinding Commitment, which, Tamayo said, was still being prepared.

Perez said the government had gotten some "positive feedback" from power sector investors regarding this planned conversion scheme.

Officials of generation firm Luzon Hydro Corp., for example, expressed openness to the idea.

Luzon Hydro's managing director Graham Corbishley said in a separate interview that the proposed BOT-to-BOO conversion plan deserved consideration.

He explained that actually owning the power asset would give the power generation firm a longer term investment of the project's contributing share if the company would join by the expiration of the 25-year period as provided by a BOT contract.

Luzon Hydro chair Bernard Alvin Garcia said he was open to the idea of converting the firm's existing BOT contract with the government into BOO scheme, but refute the gesture, there would only be to return should be of prime consideration.

BSP toughens rules on forex forwards, swap transactions

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas has tightened its monitoring of hedging mechanisms employed in the repatriation of proceeds from foreign portfolio investments.

In a recently issued circular 420, the BSP clamped down on circumvention of limits on foreign exchange forwards and swap transactions covering sales of investments or interests proceeds from BSP-registered investments of non-residents.

This is to ensure that financial derivatives products are used for genuine hedging purposes and not for foreign exchange trades.

The circular, which takes effect three days after publication in two general newspapers of national circulation, also requires that the proceeds of the repatriation be sold for peso at the then-prevailing foreign exchange market.

The instruments referred to may be in the form of shares of stocks listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange, government securities, peso time deposits and other investments as may be determined by the Monetary Board with a minimum tenor of 90 days.

Based on the circular, BSP-registered investments in government securities, money market instruments or peso time deposits may be covered by forward or swap contracts with maturities not exceeding the tenor of the investment, Bangko Sentral Supervision Circular 282.02 as of before deal date.

In the case of PSE-listed shares of stocks, however, there must be a RSEC-letter waiver together with the local broker's advisory that the proceeds of the repatriation is the equity of the forward contract coinciding with the settlement date of the PSE sale transaction.

Stakeholder participation

By Ernesto M. Ordoñez

LAST February the Arroyo-Agricultura component of 35 national and local federations and organizations, presented its proposed agriculture agenda to all the presidential candidates. Its first item on the governance concept: "Democratic participation of small agriculture and fishery stakeholders' participation and representation in planning and implementing bodies."

The point was implemented last April 19-20, 2004 during the second round of the Japan-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) negotiations in Tokyo. Alann Rocelles Jr. of the Tambayan Development Center and the Congressman Ang Kasangga, represented the small fisherfolk in the 24-person Philippine team. He was the only participant from the non-government sector. The rest were from the Departments of Trade and Industry, Agriculture and Foreign Affairs. Legislators called or invited were Representatives Agriculture Arsenio Boyboy Togneri and Teofisto Guingona.

Landslide victory

The DA and farmers should be commended for including Rocelles in the Philippine team. In the past, it was common for only government officials to do international trade negotiations without any help from the private sector. Thus, they would sometimes be at a loss when asked questions involving the private sector they represented. The result would be an exciting up often on the losing side, to the detriment of our farmers and fisherfolk.

This was sometimes because some government officials were afraid to admit what they do in certain areas. The private sector knew more about the topic than they did. In other instances, they would bother almost no inputs on private sectors from their previous individuals had created interests; they would always please the private sector above the public. This only would then be too harsh in their judgment of the private sector; they would sometimes fail to consider that in many instances, the interests of these individuals coincided with the interests of the country.

It was therefore sad to see one delegation often compared only of government officials, while the other countries would have the best and the brightest from their private sector in the areas of agriculture, industry and services. The latter would then come to the aid of their respective countries' bureaucrats in the sectoral framework fashion.

In the few instances when the private sector was included in Philippine negotiating teams, it was usually representatives of big business who would join. Because of this, the interests of the small enterprises and individuals would often be forgotten because they lacked representation in the negotiations.

It was a pleasant and welcome change to see Rocelles representing the small fisherfolk interests as part of the Philippine team in the JPEPA negotiations last April. Though Trade Undersecretary Tomas Aquino and Secretary of the DA did most of the talking during the official sessions, Rocelles had frequent one-on-one meetings with foreigners, who professed were affected by during the negotiations.

Small fishers' view

During those meetings, Rocelles made the point as if the small fisherfolk were done. Free trade with Japan would not benefit the small fishers. In this sense, what's in Subic three million fishers, unless their conditions are met. There are sustainable fisheries production, Rocelles warned of the natural resources, and the environment subsidies, is a still "added" unanticipated fishing industry.

Rocelles argued that since these conditions were lacking, the best market access of our fishery exports to Japan has had some detrimental effects. While this sector benefited our export agribusiness sector, abuses and over-exploitation occurred because of a failure in planning and regulation.

Rocelles pointed out the widespread overfishing of mangrove areas and coastal fishing grounds into unregulated aquaculture farms to serve the Japanese market by some unscrupulous huge firms. This has resulted in the worsening poverty of thousands of small fishers and their families. There is also the degradation of the coastal resources to the detriment of the future livelihood. Without the corrections made in these areas, the country's fishery exports are not likely to be sustained in the future. On the other hand, if Japanese imports enter at a time when we do not have our competitive advantage, our fishers would be the first casualties.

Without Rocelles in the negotiating team, these points may have been considered, but perhaps not as emphatically and clearly explained. Because these issues were properly considered, this Philippine team was able to its disagreement with the Japanese trade people. The Japanese had wanted very rapid trade liberalization, perhaps not realizing that our safeguards were not yet in place. The talks in Tokyo ended in no agreement on a common tariff reduction timeframe.

Assessment

Was this good? As far as Rocelles and the small fisherfolk are concerned, no agreement is better than a bad agreement. The overall assessment is that with Rocelles's skillful handling of the negotiations and the small stakeholder involvement represented by Rocelles, the more representable and the groundwork for a more fair and equitable Philippine-Japan trade agreement. As the JPEPA talks now head to talks with the Japanese, and hopefully, in all future such meetings with Japan and the other countries, the DA will continue to implement the Ayuna agenda item to "ensure small agriculture and fishery stakeholders' participation and representation in planning and implementing bodies." The government's, and the nation's, experience with Rocelles should be proof enough that the idea is sound, and that it works!

(The author is chair of Agrinetwork, a private sector committee formed under secretary of agriculture and trade and industry, and former chair and Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects. For inquiries or suggestions, e-mail agrinetwork@yahoo.com or at telefax (632) 851 8000.)

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NICHES double as shelves.

THE VIEWING room with four capiz windows.

ARTISTIC FRIEDOLIT chairs

THE FILIPINO and rustic look extend to the chairs.

Spirit of Santa Fe in Batangas

From page C1

the guest community's standards—as they saw many times before in Santa. It's inspired abode. Yes, Santa Fe as in New Mexico's capital. That's why people have a hard time thinking Lio the house designed by architect Jose Eliseo Barcia and built by contractor Rafael Bernas is another Mexican-inspired but a total creation of the Filipino today we have.

In lieu of a sloping red-tiled roof, the house's top is flat, square from being interspersed with old wood, walls and corners are rounded and have the rippled adobe look. A series of floor-to-ceiling arches found in the hall runs library, which the couple converted into shelves, is said to be unique to the Santa Fe style.

"Nothing can fire kit a drive down that spirits as it reminded them also of ruins for the dead," Jo-Ann says with a chuckle. "I told them that there's nothing to worry about."

Intense colors

Intense colors...those aqua to apple green, egg-yolk yellow to bubble-gum pink—are combined to the house's interiors as the outside walls are done in a muted and uptown shade of terra cotta.

The last element was achieved courtesy of artist Lyn Bigtas. Jo-Ann's good friend who lives in a similar, albeit bigger, house in Tagaytay, Quezon. The plastered effect resulted from combining paint and cement during the mixing process. During summer, the exteriors are pale and have a powdery appearance. How that the rains have come, they've turned into an intense shade of terra cotta.

At this pit the idea of building their dream

GRASSY and stone-strewn courtyard

EGG-YOLK yellow floor and walls add to illusion of space.

GLASS windows without bars

home from since Julia, a fan of Santa Fe houses. Having grown up in a big house, she wanted to live in a small and manageable one for a change. Besides, she and Ramon, a businessman, only have three kids to raise: Nadine, Mikaela and Gabriel.

"Since my husband and I intend to grow old in this house," says Jo-Ann, a grade school teacher, "we want a practical house that's small, easy to maintain and can provide us with a cool two-on breath for the rest of our lives."

She has it all figured out. At plans of a winding staircase, for instance, a school, arthritis-friendly flight of stairs leading to the viewing room and three bedrooms. Unlike most houses, the kitchen and dining area and not the living room play central roles in the foyer household.

"There's no dirty kitchen to hide dirty pans in this house," Jo-Ann, who loves to cook, shares. "What you see is what you get."

Incidentally, the couple did away with a entertaining pool since a guest one is readily available at the clubhouse. You did they think twice of junking the bathtub, thwarting the builder of their swimming-use-mostly part of Jo-Ann's reason.

Homely

"I don't want to deprive the kids of the novelty of using a bathtub every time we think into the pool," she says.

Practical, however, doesn't mean dull. Among the many interesting touches that stand out inside the couple's cluster of colors for the walls and living room floor. The girls' bedroom is bathed in the warm glow of bubble gum pink, while Gabriel's space reminds cool aqua. Despite its small size, the living room appears larger than it actually is, thanks to its bright egg-yolk yellow floor.

The master bedroom is painted in a shade that's neither here nor there apple green. The couple's private space, like the dining area, spills out into a private and terra-cotta courtyard. Only a series of transparent sliding glass panels divide the inner sanctum from the rest of the world outside. The couple doesn't seem to mind.

"It feels great to wake up in the morning and be greeted by the sun," says Ramon of the private village surrounded by verdant mountains. "Why should we lock behind walls and thereby deprive ourselves of the wonderful view? If

ABSTRACT painting on a series of baked tiles

MASTER bedroom, featuring Bo Cornaguet's mixed-media painting on wood panels, opens out into the courtyard

THE ONE-AND-ONLY kitchen, an earthy sea made of bricks

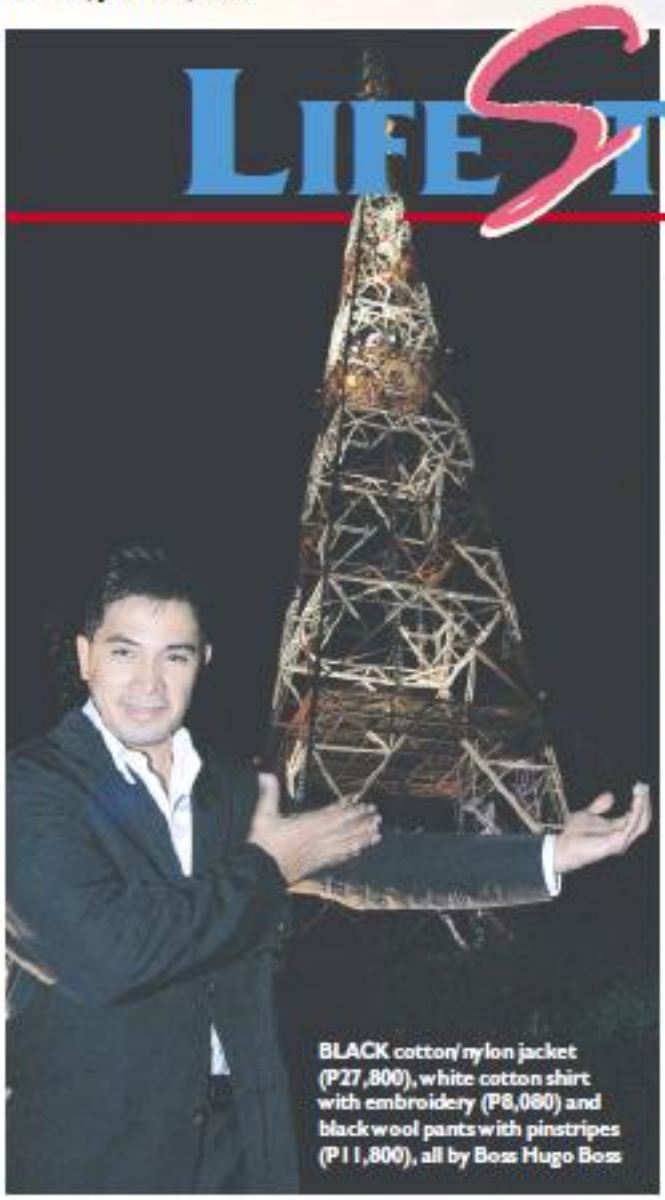
BUBBLE-GUM pink walls in the girls' bedroom

FRAMED mirror by Lipa Bigtas

BREAKFAST nook amid shapely art brick walls.

E-mail the author at energar@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE



BLACK cotton/nylon jacket (P27,800), white cotton shirt with embroidery (P8,080) and black wool pants with pinstripes (P11,800), all by Boss Hugo Boss

Award-winning actor Cesar Montano prepar to face the challenge of his new job as a Unesco commissioner

The true 'idol ng bayan'

Text by Anne A. Jambora
Photos by Chito Vecina

IN THE FUSSY, glittery world of show biz, image is everything. Or is it?

Beyond the dark good looks, charming smile, great bod and sizzling onscreen macho persona, this actor, known for persistently perfecting his craft, is also a staunch advocate of everything and anything Filipino. And his efforts aren't going unnoticed.

On May 19 this year, a pleasantly surprised—and extremely flattered—Cesar Montano was sworn in as Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Philippine Commission) commissioner for culture and the arts. While it may sound like another fancy title the actor can add to his already feathery cap, the post comes with serious responsibilities and duties.

"I was thinking, *ano ba ang maiko-contribute ko d'yan*? How can I really help, and what can I do considering my busy schedule?" Montano recalls.

To most Filipinos, his nomination and eventual appointment came as a surprise. He is, after all, better known for his award-winning roles in critically acclaimed movies ("Rizal," "Muro Ami") than his principles and beliefs.

For instance, did you know Montano has never endorsed cigarettes, beer or liquor no matter the price because "I don't intend to teach the young generation things that will ruin them"?

A health buff, Montano hits the gym almost every day to be in tiptop shape. He eats healthy, opting for fish and salads in lieu of fatty and starchy food. Well, maybe not always but most of the time. And, yes, he doesn't drink or smoke.

Like father, like children

"*Yun ang ginagawa ko para gayahin ng mga anak ko*. Children will not always listen to you but they will always imitate you. Whether I like it or not *kailangan*

THE TRUE/ C4

The true 'idol ng bayan'

From page C1

...ceive also perhaps because kung ano ...ung naabutan ko sa radyo o TV, ...ther novel day laman ng bibig ng do...ibesan agad. Ever ko ung pagpasok ko sila."

But that's just something the cam... Apo of Montano's personality. Li... ile is known of his tireless and thankless efforts to "promote" his home province, Bohol, where he says he and his family always spend Christmas. Whenever he can, Montano makes sure to put in a good word about this little paradise in central Philippines that there's hardly a Filipino who doesn't know yet of his Boholano heritage.

"Bakit naman ganoon ang Bohol. Bakit ang tubig, dagat. Aangin, ewan... Walang traffic. Gustong-gusto ko 'yung pagka-laid-back nila sa isla. Sa mga, at dagat ang ...kasabi ako. Napakasimpleng ...buhay ... Hindi mo'tigan ang ulo ng mga tao, madaling kausapin at pakisamahan," he says.

Championing Bohol

His (semi) exploits for Bohol and the preservation of its heritage and environment, he says, may have earned him the nomination in the Oscars.

But he did not seek the honor. Montano believes there is something to be proud of in every part of the country—the lovely landscape or distinctive or exotic sands from the sea.

"Bohol Arnel mila ako gaanong ambassador. I promote ng Bohol is my heart's desire. (PACE ng appointment), mahahandang ako sa get sponsors for our projects from the products that I endorse."

Born and raised in Manila, Montano says he learned the importance of heritage preservation early on. He saw how people slowly began to lose the sense the value of safeguarding traditions, culture, arts and heritage—the backbone Filipinos need to be able to stand proudly.

"Is have national pride. Montano believes parents must instill this val... ue to their children. Character is first molded at home. "Nawawalan na ng halaga to as younger generation ka... ensan ng parents nila wala ring in... tention na ibigay ng halaga ang mga ito. Halimg nawalang ang pamana... laking sinawali 'ning national pride."

Teaching values

He is a strict disciplinarian, he says, never overindulging his children and consistently teaching them the value of practically everything in life. In fact, the proud father of four says his older children know how to wash the dishes and do the laundry do basic household chores. They even plant trees in his farm in Zambales and Bulacan.

"My father once said to me that the easiest way to make life difficult for your children was to make it easy for them," he says.

Almost 40, Montano says he has never been happier. He is expecting his second child with wife Jennifer Cruz. He likes and enjoys being a father. "It's good to teach children the ABCs go to college, life," he says.

And these days, he is not just setting an example to his own children but also to other young Filipinos. He acknowledges the challenges he faces as Everyman—insecurities, worry, setbacks he's been through the years. Experience, after all, is still the best teacher.

E-mail the author or sponsor...
ms@inquirer.com.ph

HIT me with your best shot. The action star rubdowns the stiff carpenter's tool. Mary wood pinstripe suit (P35,000) and diana cannon knit polo (P9,000)

CHRISTIAN Dior's Higher Energy offers a line of personal care products such as fragrances, body and hair shampoo, and deodorant stick and spray.

J. DEL Pozo's oh-a-and-oo-oh perfumes

ACCA Kappa eau de cologne

# of musk and men

RENEE'S Classic Kenzo Pour Homme combines citrus, lotus and green pepper.

The growth of designer men's fragrance shows how guys have become less queasy about a matter usually dismissed as sissy

By Rowena C. Burgos

JUST as a signature can define a person, a scent can define a man—his style, his class and his flair. The way he smells sends a huge message about his lifestyle, hygiene, self-image and taste.

"Men are fragrance as part of their everyday grooming," says Jenny Tones, Beiersdorf's marketing manager for cosmetics. "They keep one bottle with them in the office and use it after shower before leaving for work. They also have one in the car so they can freshen up."

Scent is also part of keeping in style as men see the newest, hottest fragrance, Tones adds.

Men's fragrance is going mainstream as more and more men splash or spray on scent every day. The trend is translating to good sales for retailers, especially stores such as Beiersdorf's Eaumen.

"Men are clearly more comfortable wearing fragrances and more willing to spend on it," Reyes adds. "They choose and buy it their selves."

This is such a significant change from years ago when men were influenced by women in deciding which scent to buy or, in fact, whether to buy at all.

"Men have begun to realize that women want them to look good and smell good," Tones says.

Designer brands, Tones says, greatly influence the buying habits of men who wear fragrance. And this is evident in the number of male customers who patronize top-selling prestige brands at Beiersdorf's Eaumen.

Women is a classic. It's nearly two years now who have been using this for a long time," Tones says.

"Then we have the new Chanel Allure Homme Sport, which some men are already waiting for. The classic Allure fragrance for men also from Chanel is also a bestseller for each's fragrances for men is another favorite, as is Higher Dior."

Eaumen also features Acca Kappa, which is made of the essential oils of cedar wood and fresh balsam notes of cedar and moss, and J. del Pozo's oh oh, whose top notes are fresh and green, aromatic, exotic and multifaceted, and whose base notes are musky.

GUCCI Pour Homme offers grooming exercise in a box that includes a miniature fragrance, 50-ml shower gel, deo stick and 10-ml aftershave—free for a minimum purchase worth P2,500 at Gucci Pour Homme products.

Other bestsellers

Thierry Mugler's Alien has the succulent scents of peppermint and lemon-lime, the woody dimension of patchouli and white cedarwood and the explosive power of vanilla and styrax, cushioned by musk and Tonka bean.

Yves Saint Laurent's Rive Gauche Pour Homme, which has been awarded recently as the Best Male Fragrance by Maxims Hermoine magazine, is also available.

In retail, trends are known to determine buy. Fragrances are no exception. Men continue fashion with fragrance, style with scent.

"Men these days look for that unique fragrance that makes one feel fresh, especially in this humid weather," Tones says. "Usually men want to feel clean in a manly way. I think different generations gravitate toward different types of scents."

At Eaumen's fragrances, a highly trained staff helps clients choose the best suitable scents.

The staff, according to Tones, tries to know a customer's interests and wants so they can direct him to "products, prices and possibilities."

But perhaps it's still the women who decide in the end what scent men should wear.

"There's nothing on this earth like a handsome man who smells as good as he looks," Tones says. "It just makes you want more of him. It's so sexy, so masculine and so very inviting."

E-mail comments to rburgos@inquirer.com.ph

Products available at Eaumen's

YVES SAINT Laurent Rive Gauche pour homme

MEMOIRE D'Homme by Nina Ricci, a fresh, spicy woody fragrance, is the epitome of refined masculinity

DAVIDOFF Pour Homme Travel Spray, composed of woody clovers, citrus, green herbs and balms, is for the man on the move.

DR. MURAD'S philosophy of "not treating skin problems, but treating people with skin problems" supports his belief that "skin care is health care."

Renowned dermatologist Howard Murad has formulated a complete line of facial products that doesn't exclude hunks and hulks

HERE, see, buy Murad facial skin-care products not for their wives or girlfriends but for themselves. Mustn't it become undeniably sexier a whole line of Murad's skin care items

Believe it or not, real men exfoliate

MURAD'S Vitamin-C Infusion Facial Care products, such as Essential-C Cleanser, Daily Renewal Complex, Day/Night Moisture and Eye Cream, intend on repair and restore sharkin firmness, hydration and smoothness one's skin.

Text by Virgie Baga-Reyes
Photos by Rony Bandiola

LET'S face it! Facial skin care is no longer just a woman's concern.

As male models with flawless complexions get equal exposure as the women, ordinary guys are showing more interest in facial skin care. Products for such are enjoying brisk sales.

Real men don't wear plaid? Sir, it, for they do cleanse, moisturize and exfoliate their dogs.

Where dermatologist Howard exclusively on women before, renowned dermatologist Howard Murad has formulated a complete line of skin care products to respond to men's specific needs, too. Murad offers natural and pharmaceutical solutions to all skin-related problems.

The Murad Center, a skin treatment institute opening soon on the 30th level of Ayala's in Makati, will have experts providing personalized facial services to restore facial skin to its optimum level.

"The Murad Center will have four treatment rooms, a consultation area and relaxation room for clients with cleansing to remove dirt from the pores, followed by toning, which acts as an astringent that removes traces of cleanser from the skin and leaves the pores tightened. The toner is usually a liquid solution applied with a cotton wool pad on the skin in sweeping motions.

A soothing massage cream is applied in face, neck and décolleté afterwards. Cool and gentle, it soothes, heals and deeply hydrates the skin. The aromatherapy massages the face for 30 to 35 minutes then removes the cream with more cotton pads.

A clarifying mask is applied to specials in face and neck avoiding the eyes, which are covered with pads saturated with Hydrating Toner.

After the mask is removed with warm towel, manual extraction of white/black heads follows. The safe and painless exfoliation removes superficial layers of cells from the face and stimulates new cell growth allowing fresher, younger cells to move to the surface.

By the eye area, Essential-C Eye Cream with SPF 15 and vitamin C is applied on the orbital bone around the eye. It helps soften fine lines and dark circles.

Moisturizing cream is then applied, leaving the newly prepared skin protected and hydrated to prevent dryness and irritation.

Vitamin C booster

Another Murad signature treatment for men and women is the Environmental Shield Vitamin C Infusion Facial.

"This treatment is ideal for those who want to reverse the signs of aging, like sun spots, resulting from environmental damage," says Arriola.

Scientifically proven, Dr. Murad's patented infusion technology, according to Arriola, delivers the most powerful formulations of pure vitamin C directly into the skin to repair and prevent damage caused by free radicals, highly active and damaging substances in the environment.

In his book, "The Murad Method", Wrinkle Proof, Repair, and Restore Your Skin with the Proven 5-Week Program," Dr. Murad points out that "Vitamin C is a small marker in the skin. In the epidermis, where there is five times more vitamin C than in the dermis layers, it performs several functions. It helps prevent water loss and therefore maintains the skin's barrier function. It is involved in collagen and elastin building. And it deactivates the unstable free radicals before they can cause too much damage.

The same friendly vitamin shields the skin from the sun's burning rays, especially when it's applied in high concentrations or combined with vitamin E, carotenoids, and skin awakener" and the book says there is growing evidence to back this claim.

With Murad's Infusion Facial (P900), instant improvement can occur reducing fine lines, restoring elasticity, firmness and hydration, exhibiting damaged cells and inducing powerful antioxidant protection while smoothing stressed skin.

An ultraviolet camera Digital UV Capture shows clients the extent of sun damage unseen by the naked eye.

Renewal treatments

Two of Dr. Murad's treatments are the exfoliation and renewal facials. The AHA (alpha hydroxy acid) Rapid Exfoliator Facial is for all skin types that are starting to age. Glycolic acid is used for maximum exfoliation to reveal healthy looking skin.

"With a unique blend of antioxidants, anti-inflammatory and hydrators this treatment dramatically improves skin's texture, tone and appearance," claims Arriola.

Dr. Murad's Time Release Renewal Facial is for women undergoing hormonal changes. "It targets women experiencing menopausal skin concerns such as rough, dry skin, loss of elasticity, dullness, and fast-paced breakdown," says Arriola.

A whole line of skin care products is also available for sale for the skin outside the center. Resistance Intensive carries the skin care products approved by formulated by Dr. Murad for men and women of all ages and skin types.

The products include cleansers (to remove dirt and oil), toners, moisturizers (to hydrate the skin, and prevent dryness, cracking or irritability), serums, treatments, eye care (to reduce bags and inflammation), masks (to remove dead cells, oil, dirt and blackheads from the face), sun protection, and supplements (to enhance the skin's natural chemical make-up).

Related to serious skin care, not cosmetics, which is one to help fix the color makeup plays in the lives of women...and, yes, men. The book says quenching just 10 minutes in the outdoors can make a lot of difference.

The Murad Center will open end of June. Dr. Murad will be back in the Philippines in November to give lectures. Murad facial treatments are available at Eastern Makati and Eastern Ashtang Oil (Makati and Makati) (Alabang) for appointments.

E-mail the author at virgie@inquirer.com.ph

THERAPIST Diana Dominguez applies a generous amount of Murad's soothing massage cream to Marnie Diaz's face, neck and decolletes to dissolve any impurities and deep-cleanses pores.

AT Murad Center in Eastern's Makati, patients go through all the basic steps: inspection, cleansing, steaming, exfoliating, toning and moisturizing.

LIFESTYLE

NYMPHAE, also erroneously called lotus, gives an exotic touch to a garden.

Water garden for good feng shui

By Tita V. Gloro
Photos by Louie R. Rodale

IF YOU want to have a spot of green at home but do not think you have enough space for it, why not opt for a water garden?

You don't need a big space or to go far to look for aquatic plants. You can probably find different kinds at neighborhood garden stores. More varieties are also appearing, evidently to catch up with the fast-growing interest in water gardening.

At the Los Baños class in the University of the Philippines in Los Baños, for instance, several kinds of aquatic plants were raised in the landscape nursery there and sold at the commercial section.

But aquatic plants can be expensive. An ordinary blooming Nymphaea, popularly (though erroneously) called lotus, costs more than P150 while rare ones range from P800 to over P1,000. The current rage called heavenly are also expensive.

Why is there a growing interest in water plants? Townsend plant expert Arsenio Merilla explained that water was one of the five essential elements in feng shui and many people believed having ponds or even an mini waterfall gardens would bring a boon good luck.

"In another context, the water garden with its plants and the moving water created by a fountain could also have a relaxing effect on the environment," Merilla said.

Relaxing

"(But) more than anything else, people want a water garden because of its relaxing effect. The sound coming from a waterfall or fountain and the movement of water and plants (help) to take away worries and tension. The water garden is also known as a focal point for meditation," the plant expert pointed out.

Merilla has created many miniature water landscapes, several of them winning garden competitions. He is also highly sought for his expertise in water landscaping.

He propagates a selection of plants in his own water garden that he uses in his home-decoration jobs, garden exhibit, and landscaping jobs. The collection includes cryptocoryne species, water lettuce, Asiatic pigweed, horsetail, cat's tail, mosquito fern, and more.

"The Philippines is a rich source of aquatic plants. Aside from water hyacinths, ferns, cattails, there is a wide range of bog plants or those that grow in the shallow portion and the periphery of lakes and ponds," Merilla said.

Ponds for small space

Even in the most compact of spaces, a water garden will fit. The foyer of an apartment, for example, or a small patio can hold a mini pond complete with a fountain, aquatic plants, and rocks.

Mid-Ilo said, "You can make a water garden even in a tayloy (washing vat), clayrol, honey (stone jar)." His trademark container for tabletop water gardens is ceramic, made concrete trays.

When there is more space, he creates

BLACK-STALKED gale and kingia (water lettuce) complement each other because they belong to the same family of plants, Araceae.

Water garden for good feng shui

From page D1

mesh full-size pools with waterfall cascading on visually dramatic rocks such as those from Antipolo and Binangonan. Re-sculd are bigger plants like the Thalia, Sarracenia, canna, alocasia, and papyrus to fill the ponds.

"A small water garden can be just as dynamic with small water lilies. Thick fencing leaves and beautiful flowers are quite attractive. I also use water lettuce and some mosquito ferns for the water part. I carved the rock wall with moss and rock within the crevices a variety of small garden plants and vines like the Ivies," Morilla added.

For the deep-rooted varieties, Morilla uses a clay pot filled with soil and covered by gravel. The heavy container will anchor the roots under water in ponds or deep planters while the leaves and flowers float.

For special effects, he uses a portable garden fountain which he cleverly hides among the rocks. A thin hose conducts water to and from the fountain and panel or miniature submersible water instrument. Little garden figures are also used, though sparingly, for added interest.

"The water fountain and other accessories are available at specialized garden stores. (And) the water fountain comes in different sizes," he added.

As for sources of water plants and accessories, he suggested garden shows and the Manila Seedling Bank (MSB). Aside from water plants, ready-made water gardens on portable containers are also available at MSB, corner Quezon Avenue and Edsa, Quezon City. "There are also prototypes of water gardens that hobbyists can copy," the plants.com expert added.

Call (02) 927-0593.

REED plant, also called papyrus, grows best along the shallow portion of a pond or near the water's edge.

Why we need environmental science grads

Part I

IN HER May 30, 2004, column, "Advice for the Americas Person at Work," Tita Daisy Pamgeo took up the case of an environmental science graduate who had written her about his difficulty in landing a job.

In reply, she suggested that the writer list down his other skills and apply for jobs that could make use of them.

That serenity is one way to go about the problem. But merely there must be other ideas to help graduates like the aspiring environmental scientist who obviously must be filled with the desire to protect our environment, which is badly needed.

SEEING GREEN

Daisy Gaabril Noyda

In a country like ours, which is beset by as many environmental problems, you'd think environmental science graduates would be lapped up by private companies and government offices active in multi-environmental protection and sustainable development work.

But apparently they're not, at least not to the jobs that they should be. Some logging and fishing companies as well as some LGUs still look at our natural resources as ways to enrich themselves. This has caused the destruction of these resources and the loss of livelihood for those who depended on them for survival.

One can only point to a lack of knowledge and understanding of the value of our ecosystems as the reasons for such greed.

So we asked the heads of Environmental Science departments of leading universities as well as professional environmentalists what they thought could be done so graduates of this course could contribute to the progress of their country. In this series, they give their answers.

Low priority

Antonio S. Oposa Jr., president of Law of Nature Foundation and chair of IBP National Environmental Action Team, said: "The reason for the lack of jobs available to these graduates is the very low priority given by the government and the private sector to environmental management and to the concept of sustainable development. The thrust of our economy has long been what could be called 'extractive economics'—the patrimonial removal of natural resources, using them up and then throwing them away as waste.

"Wrong economics. Here's why: Suppose you inherited P10 million from your rich grandfather. You place it in a bank but every day, you withdraw P500,000 and gamble it away in the casino and in a wasteful lifestyle. After you spend the P500,000, you go back to your accounting books and record your losses and expenses as revenue or income.

"Is this correct accounting? Of course not, but it is the very kind of accounting that we are doing with the natural capital of the earth. We cut down the forests, use up mineral resources, scrape the bottom of the seas dry and call it income. Wrong accounting and totally wrong economics. The earth cannot sustain the waste of its human inhabitants under this kind of economics.

"What we need is CPR—the cardiopulmonary resuscitation of the earth by way of the care, protection and restoration of its productive ecosystems. We must begin this economic mindshift now. Lest we forget, all economics is based on natural resources and ecological systems—air, seas, freshwater bodies, forests, coral reefs, etc. When these are degraded, all economic productivity collapses.

"On the other hand, economic activity under the CPR system will include the establishment of marine sanctuaries, restoration of forest lands into tropical forest vegetation, a cleanup of the air by way of a mass, non-motorized transport system, organic agriculture, pollution control and environmental management systems for factories, recycling of mineral wastes, and a host of others that will require the services of environmental specialists.

"Plus, there will be jobs not only for environmental science graduates but also for many other graduates."

Yours Above reptiles

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